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AFTERWARD

BY

MARY HARRIOTT NORRIS

OF CHOICE FICTION

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AFTERWARD

BY

MARY HARRIOTT NORRIS

AUTHOR OF

"PHEBE," "DOROTHY DELAFIELD," "A DAMSEL OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY."



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DEDICATION.

This story of a struggle toward a higher life
is dedicated by the author to
PRISCILLA LEE BENNETT,
whose love of
"whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure,
whatsoever things are lovely,"
has made her a blessing to the world.

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BOOK ONE.

CHAPTER I.

A GATHERING STORM.

In that part of the Hudson river valley where the mountains divide the back-ground into three groups as unlike and contrasting as the Jura, with their ever purple velvet sweep, are different from the Alps which face them, on a wide stretch of upland, sloping gently from the river, and in the middle of an extensive lawn, stands Silverbirch. It is a mansion with so many porches, balconies and piazzas, that it looks as though it might take wings any moment.

Silverbirch had been the home for three generations of the same family, and each had added to it, till it was full of wide halls and unexpected narrow ones, big rooms and little ones, low ceilings and high ones, and spread so many roomy wings that it baffled architectural nomenclature.

The place was the joy and pride of Mrs. Winchester. To most women, their home is their personal expression. It is their creation. It is a shelter; for

the best placed women have a congenital fear of the reverse, and women who have ever been homeless love home passionately.

Mrs. Winchester was at once tenacious and intense in her attachment to Silverbirch. As an intellectual woman, however, she was not content with her Lares and Penates alone. But, while constantly seeking mental stimulus, she met all social claims with the hearty spontaneousness of a strong and varied nature. She was proud, ambitious, and self-confident, delighting, therefore, to give more than she received. She gave right royally of her time, her hospitality, and her overflowing, buoyant personality. A woman like this has troops of friends; she has, among those friends, many a latent antagonist.

Society watched her with a comfortable sense of proprietorship. She was its possession, to all intents and purposes—to be visited, to be invited, to be invaded.

But she led. She had the instinctive art of a leader, with the added endowment of beauty and fine manners. Society, never finding a truly good occasion when its envy could advise a frown, smiled; smiled on her for ten, sweet, glad, prosperous years of married life.

She had not been to the manner born, but she had been to the manner bred, which is sometimes far better, inclining a woman to render herself universally

agreeable. Still, society never forgot that it had received her, not because she had been Madeline Carew, but because she became Mrs. Henry Winchester. Her husband had opened a circle to her to which her father's sterling qualities were a bootless sesame. As soon as she discovered how much it resembled other circles less pretentious, she gave her individuality full scope. It was not long before the woman who had been received was the arbiter. She took a generous, yet willful pleasure in opening doors for those whose claims were akin to her own, though not as strong. Finding the social tufa, though somewhat uncertain beneath her step, yet sufficiently firm to bear her for ten years, she forgot that such ground may cover volcanoes.

It was late September, and Mrs. Winchester determined to give a garden party that should eclipse any similar and previous effort among her friends. She sent invitations to Lenox, to Newport, to Long Island, and the Jersey shore.

Henry Winchester was a typical nineteenth-century man in his material ambitions. Not content with a name that father and grandfather had borne uprightly, or with a fortune that allowed him luxurious establishments in city and country, he had a feverish desire for boundless wealth. His cheek burned in the night, not over his extortions, but because stocks

had declined, because he had failed to water to the utmost the monopolies he controlled, or had believed in "shorts" when "longs" had triumphed.

There came a crisis in the tenth year of his married life. He speculated with a widow's property he held in trust, and saw it swept away in a day. In a remote New England school were two orphan girls for whom he was trustee. He involved their fortune in a "corner," which broke. Then came a third temptation. He was accustomed to invest his wife's money, the slow accumulations of forty years of moderate living on the part of her parents. He sold her bonds, manipulating her one hundred thousand dollars till they promised to increase five-fold. Then this venture fluctuated for weeks, increasing and decreasing, until, one unlucky morning, all disappeared in a corn maelstrom.

Unable to obtain money otherwise, he mortgaged his city home for its full value, and cast this die in the pool of a transcontinental railway. A month later it was transferred to a broker, to whom every one of his losses had been a gain.

There came a time when nothing was left but the country home. The young man still expected to retrieve himself. He studied combinations as he had never done before.

It was at this juncture that his wife asked for a check for a thousand dollars.

He could have groaned aloud. Nevertheless, his pride and hope and belief in his ultimate success, invested even his despair with a romantic humor.

"So you want a thousand dollars, Madeline. To-day?"

"Yes, Henry."

"To-day." There was a lengthening, a settling of his face, that she remembered afterward.

"Can't you have things charged?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Would you rather have me wait a few days?"

"No, oh no! Come to the library, and I will write the check for you. I suppose you want to deposit it, and draw on it a little at a time, at need?"

They walked hand in hand to the library—Madeline with a glad silence, Henry wondering why she could not have asked, "if it be convenient." The very quality of her belief that she could have it, if not to-day, to-morrow, prevented him from confiding in her. He could not have confided to her his speculations and losses, but he could have told her that he was temporarily short of money. But she took her whole life, her wifehood, his wealth, his power, so exuberantly for granted, and it pleased him so much to have it so, that, if she had asked him for far more, he would have added it to that check.

What was he about to do? To give a check when he had n't a penny in the bank? He did not fear that

she would have trouble with it; it would be honored. But, he had never done this thing; it had a lurking, unmentionable name that he hushed his conscience from uttering. His cheek paled as he wrote the amount.

"You are not well, dear." She passed her hand caressingly over his brow.

He caught it, and kissed it passionately.

"Well, Madeline? Why, I never was better. Are you going to the city to-day?"

"Yes. That is why I want the money to-day," she said brightly. Then seeing a flush pass over his face, she added, "I am sure you don't feel well. Let us both stay home."

"No, but I will come back early." He gave her a momentary, wild glance, as if in search of protection.

How long it takes one who has been the protected to recognize the first voiceless appeals of desperation! How slow we all are to see the painful need of a man panting to be saved from himself! How seldom we give till we are literally asked! But oh, how the longing, speaking glance of an eye, the mute quiver of a lip, even the trembling of a hand that is usually steady, will come back to us to haunt us after we have read the agony of those signals in the misfortune or retribution which follows the playing with temptation.

They parted. He, since he had drawn that check, to have another thought suggested to him, which nestled in his brain, and urged itself upon his attention, until he seemed like two persons.

There is a painting by Domenichino in the Rospigliose palace, in Rome, which affords the observer a vivid intellectual conception of Satan. There is the conventional apple tree, though tall in its umbrageousness. There is a wide landscape, over which various animals are grouped. A lowering sky broods over the scene. The animals look foreboding. Wound around the trunk of the tree is the serpent. Under the tree are Adam and Eve. Eve is in the act of presenting the forbidden fruit to Adam. The merit and suggestiveness of the picture are concentrated in the tone of the landscape, the apprehension of the animals, but, above all, in the sidelong, intent, speculative, intellectual gaze of that spirit of evil. That look presents a breathless balance of possibilities. Even the serpent is unable to forecast the issue.

As Henry Winchester sat upright in the fast express, his newspaper before him, his eyes galloping from item to item, but his mind revolving ways and means with the resistless motor power of a machine, that old painting rose suddenly before him. He could not deceive himself any longer over the quality of his

self-parleying. What he should do that day he would do with his eyes open. Gold was in one scale, honor in the other.

Now he had been in such long and intimate relations with a staid uncle of Madeline, that, on the plea of a loan for a few hours accommodation, he had frequently presented a note for the older gentleman to endorse. These notes were on a bank where each kept an account. Such was Mr. Middleton's confidence, that he had often delayed to verify the amounts till a convenient moment, and especially as his nephew, through the frequent connection of their affairs, was always acquainted with his deposits.

Before leaving the train, Henry had decided to enter Mr. Middleton's office hurriedly and ask his indorsement of a note for five thousand dollars. To this sum, he would add a cipher, making it fifty thousand dollars. With fifty thousand dollars in cash he believed he knew of an operation in wheat in which there was certain success. Silverbirch would be saved.

As his uncle was slightly deaf, he trusted to be able to convince the lender that he had asked for fifty thousand dollars instead of five thousand dollars. After he had made this compact with his evil genius, he was able to read his paper attentively.

That day the note on which he had borrowed ten times the amount that Mr. Middleton had supposed, won him double its value.

Meanwhile, the old gentleman decided to go to Saratoga for a fortnight. Henry asked him, incidentally, to sign a couple of blank notes. He complied without hesitation.

In a few days, by means of hazarding half of Mr. Middleton's possessions, he was able to lift the entire mortgage from his city house, and clear his conscience of widow's tears and orphans' need.

How exciting the game was! Too exciting. His brain felt all light and heat and clearness.

One more stake with the balance of Jacob Middleton's deposits, and he would redeem the outstanding notes, destroy every witness of his crime, and turn his back on the temptations of Wall and Broad streets.

He filled out the remaining note for every cent his aged friend had uninvested. He also persuaded the bank president to hypothecate his own note for an additional hundred thousand.

Now came another temptation.

He knew the combination of Jacob Middleton's safe. In this safe were bonds that Mr. Middleton had reserved for years as a fund for extreme old age,

in case the remainder of his property, which was often wholly invested in his general business interests, was swept away.

He examined these bonds, and, finding that the coupons were not payable in six months, the impulse to steal became irresistible. He sold them, obtaining another seventy-five thousand dollars.

In a spirit of secrecy which his need engendered, he nervously and recklessly preferred this expedient, to betraying his cramped condition to any of his business friends. If there were a break between Jacob Middleton and himself, Madeline would never know the reason. No man would disgrace another to his wife, least of all, one who loved Madeline so tenderly.

If, in case this final speculation failed, and it took everything he had now redeemed to cancel the notes, repay the bank, and replace the value of the bonds, should his theft be discovered, still, there would be his wife's money, which he had not only replaced but doubled.

In all his reckoning, he never allowed for a sudden and violent explosion from the man whom he had wronged.

CHAPTER II.

THE GARDEN PARTY.

THE day was idyllic.

A voluminous mist rolled up from the river early in the morning, covering the numerous valleys, and, later, raying out in myriad rifts like golden thrones, now around the foot-hills of the mountains, now around some commanding knoll crowned with a roomy homestead. Higher and higher it mounted, until it shifted off in clouds up the deep blue sides of the Fishkills, into the passes between the Catskills, and blended with the opal lights forever hovering around the tops of the Shawangunka. Then the long, golden day began.

Henry gave himself up like a boy to the house decorations. He followed the men from tree to tree as they suspended Chinese lanterns. He watched the tables spread in arbors and summer-houses. He superintended the vast dancing-floor laid on a stretch of level lawn commanding a fine view of the river. He looked up at the deep blue sky and thought how divine the moonlight would be flashing on the river,

He made up his mind to set conventionality aside, as host, and to have one dance that night with his wife, which would bring back the ecstacy of those long-ago days, when each knew that the other loved while everything remained unspoken.

And Madeline.

She washed and dressed her baby that morning, as she always did, with her own hands, and yet lingered over the bath, kissing the rosy, dimpled feet and shoulders wet with the sweet, cool water, cooing over the dainty little creature, and looking up with glad delight when her husband came in, and saying, as she glanced from him to their daughter, "How much she does look like you, Henry! I am so glad our girl is like you. May you be as good, my own darling!" and she kissed the tiny thing fervently.

He turned away, sighing profoundly. Moral distinctions swept over him with sudden, appalling force. He turned back, and with a look and energy that were tragical, said, "She looks like you, Madeline. There is nothing of me in her. Both the children are like you."

She laid the baby down, and, hurrying to her husband, said, "How serious you are over a trifle, dear. They will change a dozen times before they are grown. But the baby *does* look like you. What

lovers we are! Think dear, ten years of happiness! If I never had any more, I do not think I would complain."

"Have I been a good husband to you, Madeline?"

"Such a good husband!" Her words died away in a crowning kiss, while she pulled his face toward her and held it between both hands. "There, now go away, or I shan't accomplish a thing," and with another earnest kiss, she left him, and, picking her baby up and motioning him fondly away, she began to dress its dainty limbs.

They saw little of each other during the remainder of the day.

Toward night, the extensive grounds had assumed a strange fantastic blending of summer splendor and autumn richness. Nature and art joined, and arbors laden with clustering grapes were still sweeter with the scent of roses. Flowers of all kinds were lavished everywhere. The great dancing platform was set in a border of chrysanthemums and scarlet sage. Vines trailed from the trees. Golden rod and clematis mingled their pomp and fragility where the light would flash strongly on some statue-crowned pedestal. Everywhere the most fantastic effects were produced. A long, winding walk, simulating the covered paths in the Bois de Boulogne, and reaching from the house to the river, was made by wild grape-vines and supple branches stretched and woven from

tree to tree of a stately evergreen promenade. Autumn leaves of brilliant hues were strewn over the floors where the tables were spread, and colored lights were skillfully hung where they would give some added richness to the general effect.

The night fell with the softness and stillness of midsummer. Not a breath stirred the leaves, sufficiently thinned to give an ethereal fragility to the foliage.

Groups of violinists were seated at intervals under the trees, and the time so carefully arranged that no two sets performed simultaneously. Choral boys had been brought from New York, and every now and then their clear, high-keyed, resonant voices broke out in glad strains that made the whole environment enchanting. On the many piazzas, æolian harps had been so constructed, that the lightest breeze in any direction might produce wild, and broken strains, like organ notes played faintly in the upper air.

Madeline stepped to her window, when her toilet had been completed. She lingered there, waiting for her husband to see her before she descended.

Her glossy, nut-brown hair was twisted in a soft, full braid, low in her graceful neck. Her colorless, but healthy complexion was animated by her clear, proud, hazel eyes, slightly dilated now, and surveying the scene with a half-triumphant, somewhat child-like expression. She liked it all, immensely.

She liked her own place in the coming pageant. Her twenty-nine years of happy life had sat so lightly that she was as calmly unconscious as a child of the usual sobering flight of time. She still enjoyed, imagined, and hoped vividly.

Her husband entered presently. His face had a narrowness and incipient sharpness that prevented it from being altogether handsome. His brown eyes, while clear, had no depth. They were like a shady well down which one looks in vain for the sparkle and shimmer of water, and whose mysterious obscurity awakens fear. Some one had told Madeline, once, that her eyes were like her husband's, but she had artlessly and truthfully replied that they might be alike in color, but that it did not seem to her that her eyes could express his thoughts. There was a vague expression, so fleeting, and yet so often present about his mouth, that, if he had been a woman, he would doubtless have been called vain. He had something of the sleek, alert, passionless look of the greyhound, and in consequence always appeared very high-bred and self-contained.

She regarded him with complacent satisfaction. Then, with a pretty, questioning smile, "Does my dress please you, Henry?"

She spread her hands out, unconsciously, over the front,—a thin, gauzy material, finely inwoven with

silver threads,—and, turning her head slightly, glanced down over her pale blue velvet petticoat.

"Do you notice this opal necklace, dear?" She lifted her chin slightly, to indicate the slender band around her throat. "I did not want to wear them, but they are the one perfect set of jewels for this skirt. Strange, isn't it, what a general superstition there is about opals! And see, Henry, I am sure I have rings enough on to suit you, to-night." She clasped her hands on his breast, and just then a flash of light from the hall through the open door touched the rings, and her fingers seemed ablaze with precious stones.

"You look regal, Madeline, and yet wonderfully girlish. Your splendid health, I suppose."

He watched her with a side-long, guilty kind of pride, as she turned from him a little later, saying, "I must go down now. Don't linger, dear. Our guests will be coming very soon, and you must be beside me, to receive the very first one."

Presently the Chinese lanterns were lighted. The yellow moon, half full, an aureole of outline around its other half, hung in neighborly nearness in the heavens. A delicious, mild, and fragrant coolness pervaded the grounds. Soft strains of music floated from unseen or dusky corners, and as the outdoor scene assumed its festal glory, the house-guests issued from their rooms, the brilliantly-lighted halls and

drawing-rooms revealing splendid toilettes and brilliant beauty, and a gaiety and abandon that were contagious.

Carriages bowled with a husky grating over the gravelled drives. Young girls and young men, matronly and superb women with their husbands, and even the old, with their silver locks, descended from these almost numberless equipages.

Madeline glanced over the surging, laughing throng gradually filling her rooms, and listened to the murmur of voices blended with strains of music, and felt that she had never been the center of a gathering so brilliant, so good-natured, and yet with such a dash of the picturesque and romantic.

The effects of light outside were so intense that, far down some vista could be seen, later, the shimmer of satin, the outline of snowy shoulders, or within some improvised bower, a whole group vividly defined, like living, blooming statuary. Here and there an electric light judiciously placed amid thick foliage, cast a network of sable shadows, black and soft as velvet on the unearthly, bluish reflection circling over a large space. The whole scene was an animated, sumptuous picture, alive with color, movement, music and laughter. Below rolled the majestic Hudson. On three sides rose the mountains, dimly and solemnly visible.

While these festivities were in preparation, a round-shouldered old man nervously and quickly entered a New York bank just before the hour for closing. His square face was crossed and recrossed with the finest wrinkles; his long, flexible, upper lip hung over the lower with the grim honesty of a watch-dog's; his scant, iron-gray locks struggled in disordered thinness on a massive head set protrudingly on a short neck. He knocked at the cashier's private door and was instantly admitted. He sat down, then, in a leather arm-chair, with some appearance of deliberation, stretching out his muscular, withered hands on the arms; but they trembled visibly, and his head betrayed an incipient tremor as he said, after a short pause which the cashier had hesitated to break:

"Well, I received your telegram. Let me see those notes."

The cashier wheeled in his chair, took out of his desk a small bundle, slipped off the elastic, and, silently handing it to the old man, dropped his eyes.

He looked up presently, struck with the intense stillness. Mr. Middleton had fainted; he opened his eyes under the restoratives that were applied, looked around vacantly, then, struggling to his feet with returning consciousness while the pallor crept in ashy waves over his wrinkled face, he ejaculated, quaveringly, "Bankrupt! I'm bankrupt! The rascal! The

thief! The villain! He has stolen my bonds, too!" He uplifted his clenched hands. "I'll punish him!"

A spasm shook his aged frame, and he fell into his chair. Half conscious, he refused aid and held himself upright against the hard back by main force.

After a while he consented to lie down. An hour later he had regained sufficient strength to be put in a cab and sent home. But, meanwhile, he had insisted that a sheriff should be summoned to wait upon him.

At seven o'clock, more bent, and trembling with sudden decrepitude, but with a still, resistless anger fixing his lips and hardening his whole face, he was at the railway station in company with a sheriff.

Every curve of that winding road seemed like an urgent negation crying, "Spare not!" Every mile of the swift current of that blue river rushing on toward the sea whispered "Speed!" When the aged act with impulse and anger, they would annihilate if they could. Pity, love, tenderness seem then like the slowly-gathering waters of some geyser, transformed by these upheavals of disappointed trust into a destructive torrent.

The same soft and beautiful night that flooded Silverbirch with mellow and mysterious radiance brooded with a light and tranquility just as friendly

over the men who drove out over a smooth road leading from the station a couple of miles further north.

They looked like other guests as they passed through the gates into a long avenue shaded with elms. But the swelling strains of music, as they approached the house, the happy laughter, even the fitful, lingering cadences of the æolian harps, in the faint breeze that had arisen, only emphasized to them the tragic sequences of Henry Winchester's folly.

The brilliantly lighted house, the revelry, the gorgeous costumes, the banqueting and dancing appeared to that staid old man whose recreation was his church, the very orgies of the devil. He felt a holy anger thrill his trembling steps and weakened frame.

He bade his comrade wait for him on a veranda. He felt, now that he was there, a strange leisure over hastening events. In the confused splendor of the gay throng, he had not been able to distinguish Henry and Madeline, and he wanted to see them once more before he separated them forever. It never occurred to him to waver on Madeline's account. He never dreamed that she could tolerate the defilement of what he considered future living with Henry Winchester would be. Still, he wanted to see them as they were, with something of the feeling with which one takes a last, melancholy, retrospective look at the dying.

He placed himself to study the dancers with a feeling of retributive triumph, at the entrance of the long, covered walk, and where a strong light threw his face and figure into bold relief. He noticed the huge circle of chrysanthemums and sage around the platform, calculating their cost, as his eyes roved over the great floor and rested on one couple and another moving through the mazy figures of the German. There! Over on the further side were Henry and Madeline, for Henry had claimed the dance his wife had reluctantly promised. He watched the supple form of the young man inclining, receding, and advancing, clenched his hands in speechless fury as Madeline glanced up, her dark eyes full of love and joy; and when, hand in hand, with the abandon of pleasure and success, they led a graceful series of bewildering figures, on and on, over the waxed floor, on—as it seemed to Jacob Middleton, straight toward himself and his vengeance, he clutched his wrinkled fingers around his hotly throbbing heart, and while the soft wind fluttered his scant locks, he tightened his trembling lips in smiling contempt.

Henry Winchester glanced toward the coolness of that covered walk, even as he pressed Madeline's hands. If the ghost of his embodied frailties and sins had stood in that yawning opening, his sensations

could not have been more terrible. His hand closed around his wife's with a grasp that shut her jeweled fingers in an agonizing vice.

She looked up with a scream, tried to keep step with her husband's wavering motion, and then, realizing that something horrible was impending, she turned as if to sustain him, when his hand loosened, and, with a groan, he fell headlong.

All those merry followers stopped with a common impulse of consternation, although the music continued its hilarious strains, as if proceeding by its own momentum.

Three or four men stepped forward, and, picking Henry up, began bearing him tenderly to the house.

A cold hand touched Madeline, and someone, in a sepulchral voice that sounded strange in its familiarity, bade her take his arm. She did so, and, in her alarm, failed to wonder at his request. As her unconscious husband was laid on a couch in his own room, this man went to the foot, and Madeline, kneeling beside Henry, applied one restorative after another, calling upon him by the most endearing terms.

When he opened his eyes, at length, they fell upon Jacob Middleton again, and again he groaned and relapsed into unconsciousness.

Madeline followed the direction of his stricken gaze, realizing for the first time that her husband's illness

was connected with her uncle's presence. She noticed, all at once, the sheriff, and, with that awful memory which never forgets a face, instantly recognized that he was not one of her guests.

"What does this mean, uncle?" she cried sharply.

"It means, Madeline, that your husband is a thief. It means that he has made me bankrupt! That is what it means!" he repeated with senile reiteration. "Better for him if he never opens his eyes!"

But what man pursued by an inexorable nemesis makes an immediate, involuntary exit from disgrace, through death?

Even while Madeline was clasping him in an embrace that meant all wifely faith and devotion, Henry awoke to final consciousness.

"Madeline," he said, after a long, speechless interval, during which he and Jacob Middleton had gazed at each other, the older man with the grim, unrelenting look of an inquisitor, the younger as if he would search the very depths of that heart for mercy. "Madeline, go down stairs and bid our friends depart. Tell them that I am ill—very ill!" He passed his hand across his brow. "While you are gone, I have an explanation to make to Mr. Middleton. Go!" he commanded feverishly, as she refused.

She went out into the bright hall, noticing, with that concentrated pain that takes cognizance of trifles, the cessation of the violins, but catching the

high, thrilling wail of a harp that a fitful breeze touched with a lingering, intermittent melody. She heard whispers in the chambers, saw white-capped maids watching her unobtrusively yet curiously, heard a momentary pause in the conversation in the drawing-rooms as she appeared descending the staircase, then the succession of that ceaseless chatter which fills time and travesties silence which everybody kept up whether or not, then became conscious of a stillness that could be felt as she took her place just within the drawing-room doors—as she thought, smiling, but, alas! with a white, pinched, *distrait* look, the look of a first and overwhelming grief which had taken her unawares.

People began talking again—even laughing. An elderly gentleman, with a benevolent fib, condoled with her, by saying that he knew her husband as a boy, and that then he fainted frequently.

Madeline knew better, but she picked the statement up with desperation, and descanted on his delicacy of constitution. The old gentleman left his regards for his host, said a few kindly nothings, and then, the icy constraint broken, the series of leave-takings began.

Man after man approached who had seen that revengeful face, and knew of Henry's speculations, and had drawn a conclusion sadly correct because of similar perils in which they might be engulfed. And,

strange anomaly, while regretting that he had been such a fool as to be found out, they had an accession of self-respect, due to that old Spartan law tacitly revived in our day, that only the thief who is detected is reprehensible.

It came to an end after a while. The final carriage rolled away, and, with the hands of the tall clock in the hall pointing to one, the weary woman bade the servants close the house. She went up-stairs. She opened the door of her room, and turned to the couch, expecting to see her husband there—yes, Jacob Middleton standing threateningly at the foot, and that other strange, respectful, silent man beside him.

But no one was in the room. Yes, there was her maid standing on the other side, deprecation in her manner and tone, as she said: "Please, ma'am, Mr. Winchester has gone away, and please, ma'am, here is a note."

"You may go to bed, Agnes."

She stood there, irresolute, in the middle of the floor, when she was alone, that sealed note in her hand, afraid for the first time in her life of the future.

She did not for a moment believe the terrible accusation against her husband, still ringing in her ears, but she did believe that he might suffer horribly,

because of some awful misunderstanding, and in this first shock, even an imputed crime was intolerably degrading.

At last she broke the seal, and with the gas flooding her solitary, gaily-dressed figure, and her eyes suffused and burning, she found courage to read.

"My God!" she cried, "Henry in prison!"

She fell in a heap on the floor.

By-and-by, when the first benumbing sense of the dreadful fact had passed away, she rocked herself to and fro in agony. A stifling sense of shame filled her one minute with revulsion for her husband, even with hatred of her children—those children who looked so like him. She loathed herself. The next minute her love for him asserted its supremacy, bringing with it a flood of defiant loyalty.

Presently she tore the jewels from her fingers, throwing them far from her in the desperation of her disgust. The opals round her throat were like a clutching infamy. Unclasping them she cast them behind her.

"Oh—oh!" moaned Madeline, a hot suffocation threatening to strangle her.

She got up, after a long time, and, turning out the gas, began to undress in the darkness.

She sat down in a window seat and wept, and tried to reason with herself over this strange disgrace, until the glimmering light warned her of

the approaching dawn. How awful the future looked in that pale light.

In that still, twilight hour, alone with her misery, she summoned a kind of dreary resolution. Leaning her burning head against the casement, she drank in feverishly the cooling dampness which overspread the landscape, recently so far stretching, with a thick, gray pall. Oh, that it might shut her in and away forever!

As in the ancient lay of Beowulf, it seemed to her that the spirit of the marsh brooded over the earth in a half-visible form. She recalled the old poem idly, and, in the very exhaustion of feeling, allowed herself to fancy the fog assuming a dragon form and creeping on and on till it seized and destroyed her. Ah, what a relief would be hers, then. An eternity of mystery was not dreadful in the face of indefinite years of disgrace.

She walked waveringly across her chamber, and, for the sake of strength to consider and solitude to learn to hide her suffering from the curious, she threw herself on the bed. There was such a mad struggle in her heart—one minute between love and hate, such a sudden, strange mental vacuity; the next that kept her from grasping a line of thought just as it began to take shape, that she felt frenzied. If she could only sleep, or, if she could only think, she might see her way more clearly.

CHAPTER III.

DESOLATION.

CONJUGAL relations are complex; so complex, that when they are disturbed, no one feels able to predict the final denouement. There are, it is true, an appalling number of gratuitous predictions, but their very multitude shows that no true prophet has arisen or at least been recognized. Whether conjugal love will survive disgrace, whether faithfulness will exist eternally side by side with unfaithfulness, whether women are like dogs, the more unremittent in their attentions the more they are abused, whether men in love are Don Quixotes to whom a mere windmill is a romantic illusion to the end of time,—all these premises and kindred others immediately arise and are treated deductively and inductively whenever a family trouble becomes public.

After Henry Winchester had confessed his guilt, had been sentenced for six years, and was imprisoned, those numerous guests whom he and Madeline had entertained most loyally and most royally fell, with few exceptions and one accord, from the altitude of

dear, congenial friends like the multitudinous leaves that one sharp, frosty, windy night flutters to the ground. But such an army of rustling leaves makes a terrible uproar.

It is needless to say that Madeline suffered intensely, but her pain was aggravated a thousand fold by the queries that reached her in one way and another as to what she proposed to do in the whole matter.

It was of course natural and proper that she should act the belief, whether she felt it or not, that her husband was guiltless and her own faith in him absolute till judgment was passed and his own self-condemnation made public; but what then?

Perhaps others were more aware than she had been herself till her trouble came, how proud she was. It also goes without saying, that to have been a leader of fashion in New York meant that she was fond of display; whether this fondness would take a vulgar, or a romantic, or a practical turn, interested not a few.

Then her children. Young as they were, the prospects of both the boy and the girl were projected upon the canvas. Women declared it was a pity that they were not both girls; they could make of course, at the best, but indifferent marriages; but it would be a comfort to them, poor things, to drop their name. Men declared with great solemnity, men

who had made mammoth fortunes in a day out of railway syndicates, or cleared a million in a season out of pork, or had shut off the water supply of a whole county, or had, through rebates, practically raised the freight on produce to small farmers till their little homes and few acres were swallowed by gigantic grain monopolies,—such men averred, with a sad shake of the head, that they would rather bury a son than live to see him marry Winchester's daughter. And the boy. How smart is he? was the question. The father was too smart. That was the trouble. Better keep an eye on that boy! Which meant, better close all chances to him.

Some garrulous hanger-on to whom immediate communication of news had become a mental morphine habit, told these things to Madeline, and her nerves danced and her heart bled as only those can know who suffer and keep still.

She had thought at first, that it was a question relating solely to herself and her husband. But—the children? The children? More and more she asked herself, what is best for the children? Sometimes she thought she would take them and live abroad. So many people in disgrace did that sort of thing, though, that she knew she would gain nothing for their future in such a course. No, their best chance was in their own country.

She had seen them and cared for them mechanically in the first days of her trouble, her heart so destitute of any feeling but a great, unreasoning, ceaseless ache, that it seemed to her she could see them die without a regret.

But, by-and-by, all this changed. She loved them with a kind of savage proprietorship. She asked no odds for either them or herself. It did not hurt her in these days to see servants shrink before her unreasonable severity or to feel that a kind of frightened silence reigned in her presence. Better to have people afraid of her. She had gone down in the dust of fear and humiliation and bitter, bitter solitude, when the little attention she received was an insult in itself.

From a feeling of wounded pride, misplaced trust and the natural revolt which follows the personal acquaintance with positive and penal sin, she began slowly to react toward a magnanimous pity for her husband. She had not wavered in all outward conformity to what she believed her marital obligations. She had even entered, unveiled, Ludlow street, during these dreary days that intervened before he was imprisoned on that very river familiar to him from his birth. She had, however, carried into his presence, an atmosphere of separation that made her visits torturing to them both. She would do her duty, but some souls are so bounded by cold duty that they act, unconsciously, the part of evil spirits.

Henry Winchester had sinned deliberately and awfully, but he had also sinned under a temperamental impulse, when once the temptation had gained sufficient impetus. Now, in the reaction, he wondered as decidedly as Madeline, how he could have appropriated what was not his own. The same affinity as well as affection which had united him and his wife in their joyous past, existed on his part still. Her still, cold, careful attention was a brand of his ignominy which he would gladly have foregone, much as he loved her. When, handcuffed and emaciated, he left the city for the state prison, his uppermost thought was like what Cain's must have been in fleeing from the sight of man. All humanity meant to him the unapproachable gentleness and condescension of his wife. He longed to be hidden from a presence beloved, but more dreaded.

When he was in prison, Madeline's fortitude gave way; but it gave way when there was no eye to see her but God's. The sense of such an oversight was not comforting to her; neither was it awful. She did have a keen sense of it, but she looked up to God in a wildly defiant way, feeling that if He did not understand He ought to, and that, with Him, her very desperation would be her absolution. She was unutterably thankful that He was a silent God. She wanted no word from any one. Comfort there was none. Who could give her sympathetic advice save those

who had suffered similar disgrace? She knew not one, but thought of many to whom this thing seemed far more likely to have happened than to herself. Ah, what a brand this was—the wife of a thief! She said the terrible word aloud to herself. She held the wrinkled, revengeful face of her uncle before her vision. She went through, again and again, the wearisome, agonized horrors of that first fatal night. In the face of the present, what were the ten happy years of her married life? They were like a dream—empty.

She had sat down on a hard chair, for physical ease was as distasteful to her as mental repose was impossible. She sat alone in her darkened chamber, the doors locked, and, looking vacantly before her, thought and thought of the exceeding bitterness of her situation. She heard a train rattling in the distance under the stony cliffs along the river. That train had passed under the very shadow of that living tomb where Henry was. Every train that went up or down would have the light obscured in the cars by the gloom of those impinging walls. But the shadow would go as quickly as it came, and yet Henry would be there, day and night, for six long years. It was terrible, this being shut away from all the familiar, homely relations. It was terrible to live

with the dregs of humanity—ah, to be part of those dregs! That was what everybody would say of her husband—that he was where he belonged.

She thought of that awful verse in Revelations: "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." It was with such a class of people that Henry was to live—to eat and drink, to work and sleep among! She clenched her hands.

So familiar was she with robberies for which there is as yet no law, with men whose honesty is of so little moment, that their colossal fortunes are the respectable monuments of their falsehoods, so familiar was she with wickedness in high places, that she had smiled on such men, entertained them and their families, enjoyed the munificence of their ill-gotten millions, and idly sighed that these things had to be. Ah, how different it was now. It seemed as if all the punishment of all the evil growing out of the greed for wealth and show and luxury in a great city had been visited on her head, and that Henry had been the one poor discovered wretch. Why, there were hundreds who should be his prison-companions. And these hundreds despised her and her children!

Pride is a mean quality of the human heart when it centers upon self alone. Selfishness is meaner still.

A heart cannot be wholly honest with itself until it is willing to wrestle with these foes for just what they are.

The horror of her own selfishness awakened Madeline's first comprehension of her husband's exile. Her own wounded pride made her realize the bitterness of her ignominy.

She became aware that her very fondness for the accessories of great wealth made her suddenly envious of those who were still unmolested in the enjoyment of theirs. Her former complacency was stirred to its depths. What a nest of evil passions her heart revealed. If the outside world was unmitigatedly cheerless, yet how more than cheerless, how barren of all uplifting qualities was her soul.

She began, for the first time in her life, to feel out blindly for a peace that the world can neither take nor give. Hers had been a happy nature. She was desperately unhappy now. She felt that the things and the people that had made up her life before could never fill it again, yet it was a fullness of something that she wanted.

Circumstances and people had been so unkind — not positively, but negatively. Still for her it had all the withering force of intentional unkindness. A few familiar friends had called, usually, however, bringing others less familiar with them, and they had talked as if far apart. The friends had gone away,

saying, "Poor Madeline! She is changed. We had better leave her alone." And Madeline felt that if they could not have come in a way to make their affection overleap all barriers, and could not have come alone, with open arms, and tears to mingle with hers, that theirs was no friendship for her need.

One lady had called, one whom she had kept at a distance, but who had admired her and followed her with a persistent kind of worship which women occasionally have for one another.

She had had her notion of heights and depths in character, even in the ultra-gay world in which she had moved, and her chief objections to Mrs. Saxby had been that that lady had too little force and was too affectionate.

Mrs. Saxby had come in a pouring rain, and, when she saw Madeline, she had hastened forward, and had taken all the coldness and slenderness and severity of the heart-broken woman into her arms, and had laid her cheek against Madeline's, and had wept for her.

"My dear," she said, between her sobs, "I love and admire you more than ever, and whenever you want friends, try John and me. We will stand by you, and feel proud to do it."

Madeline cried a little, a few dry, choking gasps, a few hot tears coming unawares. It was the "and feel proud to do it" that had overcome her.

Mrs. Saxby's very affectionateness had taught her the sweet humanity of love in Madeline's extremity.

"A handful of friends, out of hundreds!" said Madeline that dreary afternoon, after she was alone. "A handful who really care for me!"

She got up and paced the floor, her pale face pinched with fatigue and dull with despair. The weeks had flown, and she had hardly known it, although it was now December. With her hands clasped behind her back, with her somber, plain black dress unrelieved by any ornament, she was a broken, helpless-looking woman. She glanced from the windows as she passed them. The sun had set; the short winter twilight was already falling. Overhead was a thick, low expanse of gray, cloudy sky, and, descending softly and rapidly was the first snow. It had already tufted the bushes and covered the walks and drives. Everything was burdened with its pure weight, and the rapidly increasing darkness gave a weird, unearthly beauty to the scene. It had veiled everything so noiselessly and had beautified while it concealed. She wished for some spiritual enfolding as silent and as white. A strange, new question came to her as she gazed upon the landscape bounded by a snowy nearness. Whom had she loved and

caressed in their extremity? When had any stricken soul interfered with the flow of her gaiety, or cost her a night of sleep, or a day of sacrifice? She was appalled. Her life had been herself and her family. If others had needed as sorely as she, and had found as small a measure for the greatness of their need from her casual word and formal condolence, what was she that she should complain?

For the first time in her life, she longed to get away from herself.

She rang for her baby. When it came toddling in, she caught it in her arms with something of the old gentle tenderness. She even exerted herself to play with it. The little thing, who had clung all these weeks to its silent, unresponsive mother, awoke to a glad gaiety, and laughed and talked in its broken prattle, until its little, rippling screams resounded through the house.

"I guess the missus feels better, now it is over," said the pantry maid to Charles, the butler, and Charles, making a crescent of his mouth, and lifting his eyebrows, said,

"It be about time."

On the strength of the change, he lighted an extra lamp in the drawing-room, and put some flowers, according to the old custom, on the dinner-table.

When dinner was announced, Madeline asked for her boy, and when Paul came timidly and questioningly, she put her arm around him and said:

"Paul shall take dinner with mamma after this."

What a look of love the boy gave her! And such a little thing to do! she said to herself.

Then they went down stairs together, the baby tottering and laughing from stair to stair, as she allowed it to try to descend by her side, Paul with his little arm reaching up around his mother's waist, and that mother, with a subdued, protecting smile and an uplifted look in her white face that it had never worn before.

That night she had Paul's bed placed beside her own, and she put both children to bed herself, Winnie in her own bed. After this, since life would be hard for them at the best, the children should be with her night and day, and she would be mother and father to them both.

Toward midnight, and long after they were asleep, she knelt beside them and tried to pray. Never before had she cried unto God with her heart. For the first time in her life, she cried out unto Him in great need.

Then followed a month full of homely detail, almost daily relapses on her part into silent, despairing grief—days when she was cold toward the children and merciless to her own strength; other days when

she would turn from the windows with frightened timidity if she saw a shadow outside, lest she should have to meet someone who might hurt her. She had a constant struggle with herself to keep a general self-respect, useful in meeting the outside world, so that the children should never learn from her to carry themselves less erect, or to question concerning the blight that had fallen on their lives.

She had many conferences with her lawyers, and held herself to a personal acquaintance with all her husband's liabilities.

Matters were worse than the lawyers at first thought, but, if Mrs. Winchester were willing to take time to make good her uncle's losses, she could save an abundance for herself and children.

But this she would not allow. She was too honorable to have a cent outstanding longer than was possible, and her worldly wisdom taught her that only the nicest honor on her part could in any way react for her children.

She cried many a night in motherly pity that they looked so much like their father, but this very resemblance pleaded silently and effectively with her for that father.

These first real efforts of her life to act outside of merely present interests, even if only for her children, turned the channel of her thoughts more and more toward the general need of humanity. There were

so many worse off than she was that she was watching for them, and often found an opportunity of saying kind words or doing a deed that called for precious strength or time.

One thing she could not bring herself to do, and that was to see her uncle. He had not supposed for an instant that he would forfeit her love and respect. If he took Henry Winchester's property, it would be to give it back to her. But Madeline desired that money neither for herself nor her children.

When spring came, and her affairs were adjusted, she felt a kind of melancholy pride when the town and country houses were offered for sale, when all New York were flocking to criticise and buy their pictures, when the stables were empty of horses and carriages, and when half of her own property lifted the last claim from her husband.

Then she felt as free as she ever could feel. She had her two children; and she had more than enough to meet their simple needs.

For the rest, she was living, moments at a time, only, it is true, in a larger world than she had ever believed existed. She had n't a very intelligent love for God, but she was feeling out toward him.

CHAPTER IV.

IN PRISON.

MADELINE had done what might seem curious to women whose affection is chiefly instinctive. Never in thought, for a moment, abandoning her husband, she had not gone near him during that first long winter, and she had received no message from him.

But, with the first bloom of May, and with her heart free from abiding bitterness, she knew that she could trust herself to an interview.

The quality of her affection had gradually and permanently changed. The very helplessness of her situation had evolved her personal strength. In proportion to the consciousness of personal strength, and, if you will, of an almost caustic rectitude, had grown a quiet, pitying, protecting affection for her husband.

When a woman loses the sense that her husband is her protector, something choice dies out of her love. Her love may be as enduring thereafter, but it has

more and more the sole quality of friendship, deeper, perhaps, as a sentiment, but not so comforting or so joyful to either.

For a long time Madeline could not tolerate the thought of Henry's crime; but, in becoming intolerant to vice, whether outside or inside of a prison, she had become a woman of sterner stuff, and with a more pitying heart for the sinner. When she had thought little and cared less about such matters, she had really been very indifferent to sin, but had a social aversion to open and too flagrant sinners.

Many a lovely woman has, unconsciously, an ultra-utilitarian set of morals which, if codified, would perhaps amaze a La Rochefoucauld.

When she entered the station, leaving behind her an almost transparent blueness of sky which seemed to exhilarate the hurrying throngs to a pitch of gaiety, the gloom and vastness of the space she had to traverse to her train, accorded with her thought. For months, now, she had felt lost in a mystery so profound and far-reaching, that persons and places became spontaneously symbolical. The soaring, grimy arches above her head, the smoky vistas under the bridges far beyond, the discordant gratings and puffings and sudden clangings, the rushing throngs of silent faces either way. Ah! All this was like the seriousness, the strain everywhere, the universal sadness and darkness. She walked on with steady, firm,

sedate tread, a woman a little taller, much slighter, than one usually meets, and so unsmiling that occasional observing passers-by turned and looked after her with startled wonder.

Grief and disgrace combined have many expressions. Rarely do we meet a soul to whom they mean emancipation. Madeline was burrowing through dark, uncanny passages that might lead nowhere, but might conduct to the light. When alone she had the absorbed, almost trance-like manner of a person intently listening and trying to comprehend the vaguest murmurs. She might be bruised, she might be broken, but she was never the woman to die under sorrow. "If I could die!" This she said time and again to herself.

By-and-by, when the train had left the tunnels and was skirting the river, she was roused into temporary forgetfulness. A quivering, bluish haze which did not obscure the landscape, but tranquilized and warmed it, rested on the Hudson, and contrasted vividly with the radiant greenness and fragility of the new foliage, whirling now past her near vision and again receding, until, on the hither shore, it impinged upon her sight, a dazzling, vivid stretch of brilliant color. Everywhere the most etherial blue, the most living green! It was a new, fresh, glad world. Yet it was the old world. All the landmarks greeted her. The same craft were sailing up and

down. The same towns clustered at the foot of the hills or nestled in the coves. Dull freight or coal trains darkened the view and swept on with the same dust and rumble as of yore.

Something from within had come out; that was all. But what beauty! What newness! What splendor! Into what oblivion the winter and the neutral spring had passed! A little more sunlight and the ice-gorges had burst. A little more heat, and the buds had unfolded. Heat, and moisture and light, and somehow brown earth and gray trees became prismatic, and exhibited a world of teeming shapes and blooming fragrance. O, how wonderful was this change! The landscape was a hint to Madeline—nothing more. It enfolded her in a grave, sweet, intangible influence which was not hope, for even the faintest hope must have something material to rest on, if it be of this world. It seemed rather like the refreshment which comes from seeing a purely happy face, or the solace which comes from contact with joyous strength.

She looked till her head swam. She drank in the freshness and bursting life as if they would restore her, had she been dying.

She shuddered when that darkening, gloomy pile glided past the windows, as the speed slackened. The next minute, when they stopped, her heart throbbed heavily, and an ugly, choking sensation

momentarily deprived her of the power of utterance. Nevertheless, she felt still more merciful, more tender, than she had an hour ago. She was glad, so glad because of the basket of fruit and dainty food she carried. She had prepared it willingly enough, but not yearningly. Now her heart yearned.

She entered the prison composedly, idly wondering who among the others there were sight-seers, and who had—friends.

But that waiting, finally, in such near solitude—the dreadfulness of it, the anticipatory agony of it! She sat down on a settee and leaned her head against the wall, it trembled so. She fixed her eyes upon the door by which he would enter, and its paint glared at her. It seemed as if a sound, a touch, a voice, even, would be unbearable. Presently this intense excitement subsided. She felt—nothing. But every sense was on the alert.

She saw the knob turn in the door. She calculated the width of the crack when it partially opened. Then when it was really opened, and her husband stepped inside, and, closing it, paused just over the threshold, with a sudden gathering together of her strength, she rose, walked to him, and kissed him.

He took her hand, and, kissing it deprecatingly, looked up.

"Let us sit down, Henry." She felt extremely weak. She led him to the settee.

He sat down a little apart from her—alas, it suited her better thus, also. But, as she sat there, face to face with him, and looked into his brown eyes, hungry, faded, and ashamed, noticed his ill-fitting garments hanging limply on his thin body, saw the coarsening influences of bad air, poor food, and confinement, then that motherly affection for him which had been gathering force for weeks, suddenly yearned almost divinely. Reaching out both her hands, her hazel eyes, solemn, tender, and tearful, she said with infinite tenderness,

"My poor Henry!'

He leaned his head against the wall, and a great, broken, shivering sob shook his frame. He had not expected tenderness. He had measured her pride. yea, her vanity. He had felt the coldness of her rectitude; he had believed that she would be just, and nothing more. But this pitying love, so different from anything he had felt for months, was sweet, and it was unbearable. For Madeline had been his wife! She was that in reality no longer—never would be! never could be!

If the heavens had opened and revealed God as judge, he could hardly have felt more overwhelmingly this lost conception of his ignominy. In proportion as he respected her, he justified her. He knew that

such a woman, to whom sentiment was only a part of marriage, could never restore him to her reverent love.

"Dear, we must talk together. There are so many, many matters to talk over. I want to tell you about the children. I have brought their pictures." She drew the photographs from her pocket, as she spoke. "They pray for their dear father night and morning. They think you are in France. See, here is Winnie."

He turned his head away. He did not want even the pictures of his children to be behind prison walls. But he gazed, soon, long and despairingly on that baby face. He saw his own lineaments reflected with infantile grace. He longed, bitterly, to hold the dimpled hands, and yet, awful contradiction, he would have fled, had he thought that those pure eyes could see him.

"The—boy, Madeline?"

"He is well, and strong, and so handsome. He is manly and good, too, Henry."

"Teach him simple habits. Make him so truthful that he cannot lie—or steal! I wish I could die, and my memory pass away, before the children grew larger. God grant I may never leave this place alive!"

"God grant you may! You and I lived selfish lives. Half my grief, at first, dear, was because

this—this thing reacted upon myself. It is very hard!" She twisted her hands, unconsciously, against her breast. "But I think—I think there is a higher way for both of us. When you leave, Henry, I will stand by you as far as I can in justice to our children; and meanwhile you will work to confirm your character—the inside character." She took his hands in her earnestness, and pressed them with each thought. "You are freer to-day, Henry, from gain unrighteously won than many who scorn you and pass me by. Every cent is paid. Every smallest claim against you is settled. So there remains for us both, dear, only to make our peace with the heavenly power. I do not know very well, yet, how to do that, but I am learning. I share your sin with you, dear. I made it easy for you to be tempted, and I failed to see when you were tempted. I share it, Henry, night and day. I do!" She covered her face and sobbed.

"Don't say that, Madeline. No one is to blame but I. And since I did—I'm glad I'm here. I wouldn't wish one day of my term canceled, except by death. Is there anything left for you and the children?"

"Enough."

"I hardly see how there can be enough."

"There is. Don't ask me more now. The next time I will go over the business with you in detail. I am coming to see you once a month, hereafter."

"Madeline," interrupted Henry, "promise me one thing. Promise me, for the sake of the children, not to treasure any feelings against your uncle."

She rose, suddenly, white with wrath.

"He shall never appease his guilty conscience through kindness to the children. He committed just as great a crime as you did. He blasted the life of the helpless, and he has made me a laughing-stock. When he should have been a father, he was a demon. If he had given you time, I would have upheld him. Cent for cent it should have been. I have never seen him from that day, and I never will. My children are the last of his blood. Let the dishonor he has brought upon us remain, so far as his gold is concerned. I loathe the name of money!" She turned her head away, and her words died down till her voice sounded in a faint whisper.

He longed to take her in his arms. But what was he! He dared not touch her. She could come to him, but he could never go to her.

"Henry," she sank down on the seat beside him. "There is an awful feeling in my heart toward that old man."

"Don't, don't feel so, Madeline. He was frightened about his money. He thought I had squandered all

he had. He trusted me because he thought I was proof against the corruptions in speculation. His vengence came down on me before he had time to realize that it would ruin the innocent."

She put her hand to her temples, as if new light had smitten her. It was such a coil of ugly acts and mixed motives, turn which way she would. It was easier to hate than to be indifferent—but—her tired head and aching heart refused to go further.

Husband and wife were both relieved when the summons came for her to depart. Shame and regret, and a wild, rebellious love which threatened to burst all restraint, consumed him. The proud, sad, ambitious heart that Madeline believed she had constrained into a resigned and even Christian attitude had, with one wild throb, broken these new and still unfamiliar restraints, and, all at once, was at war with society, itself, and even God.

On her journey back to the city, though air and light and view were just as lovely as earlier in the day, she had neither sight nor thought for them. She sat in her chair, her head against the cushions, her eyes closed, a shadowy world of thought and feeling passing before her. Her interview with her husband had shocked her inexpressibly. The prison smell was in her nostrils still. The stripes on his clothing danced up and down before her eyes with every motion of the train. His closely shaven head

and face, his hands already callous, his lined, discolored face, his longing, humbled eyes from which something manly had gone,—all smote her pride and affection with appalling force. She clutched her fingers tightly around the arms of her chair as the picture passed and repassed before her, each time with some new and sickening detail. She had seen a momentary, almost greedy look shoot from his eyes when she first uncovered her basket, and then, the gentleman getting the better of a dainty appetite still unused to prison fare, he had set the basket aside, to her relief.

"Always myself, myself!" she moaned, in her helpless agony. She began to despise the fastidious niceties of a highly-bred woman. They made her feel so useless for all the cruel, coarse needs which untoward circumstances develop. Then her fancy projected the results of six years of such a life. What would be left of the man whom she had called husband? All her courage for him forsook her, and out of her very affectionateness, she cried to God to shorten his life. Then her conscience lashed her for her cowardliness, and want of proper regard for justice. For Madeline, instinctively dwelling on the idea of life for life, atonement in some form for wrong-doing, ingrained into the very warp and woof of Saxon blood, believed that he could be purified only by a long life of self-denial and lofty uprightness.

CHAPTER V.

JACOB MIDDLETON.

A DEEP blueness was in the sky when Madeline, on her return, stepped from the street-car. She looked up, and far away in the vanishing depths one liquid star trembled. The peace of that upper space was benignant, and calmed her.

She had a walk of a half dozen blocks to take through the broad and quiet streets of the quarter where her rooms were.

The west wind brought on its wings the fragrance from blooming shrubs. There was even a scent of fresh mold. She thought of the previous spring.

The resignation which comes from exhaustion through poignant suffering was in her step and subdued her face, as she ascended the stoop, mounted to her parlor, and sank into a chair. Untying her bonnet strings mechanically, she pulled off a glove, and, lost in thought, sat with folded hands.

Two great, discouraged, hopeless tears trembled on her lashes and rolled over. She wiped them away and repressed a sob.

She got up, pulled her bonnet off, and, as she did so, her eyes fell upon her uncle, sitting in the corner behind the door she had entered. His wrinkled old hands were on his knees. His tremulous, palsied head, protruding more than usual, was bent toward her. His square, seamed face was full of an aged appeal that made her momentarily irresolute.

"Madeline, I'm sorry! I'd give a great deal to undo it."

"You never can—never! You have worse than orphaned the children. You have disgraced your own blood."

Now, although she had written her sentiments freely to Mr. Middleton, he had been able to shake off any unpleasant effects from them. If he chose to make concessions, her attitude would doubtless become altogether different.

To his grim Scotch nature, law and law alone could punish. He had gone to church twice every Sunday since this ugly affair had happened, he had stood up in the weekly prayer meeting, his two hands clasped on the seat before him, his stern, honest eyes closed, and had invoked his Creator in solemn tones to bring sinners to the fold, to keep the godly in the narrow way, and to speedily condemn wickedness in high places. Unconsciously, his prayers were so personal, that no hearer, acquainted with his grievance, could mistake their tenor. Then had sat

down, his straight mouth still straighter. He cherished the thought that he had never condoned wickedness. Skin for skin, tooth for tooth, it had been with him for seventy years. Madeline was his kith; her children, too! She should come to live with him, and the boy and girl should be "plucked as brands from the burning." The lake of fire and brimstone were awfully real to him, and these days, if he had analyzed his thought, he would have found that he believed them suitably and singularly well ordained from the beginning for Henry Winchester.

Month after month passed. Although he never wavered in his conviction that he had done right, still, a hugging loneliness at his heart made him decide to propitiate his niece. Since the child felt the disgrace so bitterly, and suffered so cruelly, he was sorry that he had dealt justly with her husband. And, if it would bring her to him, if he could feel the touch of her cool, strong hand once more on his head, feel again that his aged whims were attended to with daughterly love,—for her good and the children's, bring her under his roof,—why, he would yield the point a little to her in private, and say that he was sorry.

No man ever rolled up Broadway in his comfortably upholstered coupe with a more magnanimous feeling than did Jacob Middleton that May afternoon, when he had decided to "apologize" to Madeline. No

man ever believed more absolutely in his paternal goodness than did this lonely being who wanted his home brightened, his heart cheered, and—shall we say it?—a niece by his side in public, whose presence there would vindicate his justice, and be a warning to transgressors.

The beginning of his business life was applied with skilled precision to his ethics. He worshiped a God whom he believed as limited and as dogged and as calculating for personal glory as Jacob Middleton. "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory," he prayed, repeating this ancient invocation of reverent monks. For mine is my kindom, my power, and my glory, he lived, demanding the acknowledgment from every employe, but rewarding it likewise, conscientiously, with wages or salaries that were never delayed, and looking after their needs in sickness or misfortune with a care and generosity that none could gainsay.

He had reasoned it out with himself that so it was right to do, and so he did. But the enlarging love that gave when pity cried, the revealing charity that showed a whole creation groaning, yea, travailing in pain, that he must help, whether deserving or not, such love and such charity he knew not. He had studied the letter of the law till spiritual blindness

overtook him. The needs of his own nature, though, ached for something entirely outside of and above the province of law.

Love for his niece softened his hard, upright nature the longer he sat waiting in her parlor. Many familiar things about the room suggested tender reveries of her. When he heard the door open, a strange, new timidity held him still. So it happened that he sat there an eye-witness of misery real enough and acute enough to make an acknowledgment spring from his lips in the simplest possible form.

But when Madeline stood there before him, white with deathly pallor, scorn and grief contending in her expressive face, and called him Jacob Middleton! Morally vicious! Him, who had given a tenth of his income year in and year out, as an offering to God! Him, who had never borrowed or owed a cent! Had placed him, in his unspotted uprightness, side by side with her criminal husband, his indignation obscured his love. He rose; his hand shook as he pointed his finger at her, and told her that she would bring still further ruin to her children by her unholy anger.

"It was right to part you from that wicked man. It was right to punish a sin against God and society. I came here to offer you my home and my protection, and my fortune when I am gone, and this is the way

you return your old uncle's faithfulness and love. My fortune shall go elsewhere." But his eyes belied his words.

"Do you think, Uncle Jacob, that I would touch a cent of your money? Do you realize that I—yes, and my children, for I will teach them so—would scorn to accept the smallest favor from you? O, Henry did wrong; I grant it; he stole! And you—you have stolen my peace of mind forever!"

"I did right! I did right!"

"You did not do right. Your mercenary nature was aroused. You thought you were bankrupt. In your passion, you sought and found revenge. Your moral ideas are so low—yes, they are," and Madeline waved her hand imperiously to stop him, as he tried to speak—"that you punished a few days of temptation and sin by everlasting disgrace. When a man loves money better than family honor, he is no longer kin to me. Uncle Jacob, I pity you the possession of your gold. I would rather, to-day, be the vilest prisoner, with a heart that could be touched by the infirmities of human nature, than a respected deacon clothed in the rags of self-righteousness. When I think of *you*, poverty seems a lofty honor."

He cast on his niece one look of still, bitter, speechless anger. Then, tottering past her, he fumbled his way down stairs, gave the coachman the name of his lawyer, and, getting into his brougham, sank a trem-

bling, enraged heap of decrepitude, into the seat, plotting retaliation for the benefit of the heathen and education.

Before he retired that night, Harvard University was richer by one hundred thousand dollars; Madagascar was Christianized to the extent of ten thousand dollars; the Azores had a public library for the spread of current news; fifty scholarships were endowed in twenty-five colleges; the remainder was to be spent in building and endowing a church property in Alaska.

CHAPTER VI.

A DOUBLE LOSS.

JULY was far advanced before Madeline could leave the city. Her business was then sufficiently adjusted for her to seek a place far away for the summer months, a place where she knew no one, and where she could rally a semblance of gaiety for her little ones. They were beginning at times to wear the self-contained look which children learn who are too much in the presence of suffering. More than once during these long months, Paul had crept into her bed in the small hours of the night, and twining his arms around her neck had said plaintively,

"Paul loves you, Mamma. Paul loves you so much, so much!"

"Yes, darling," swallowing her hot grief and clasping him to her breast. "Now let us go to sleep together." The warm, curly head nestling in her neck at such times was an unspeakable comfort.

She took her third journey to the prison before departing, and then, the packing done, her nurse dis-

missed, she turned her face northward. O, the relief, to be absolutely alone, among strangers, with her children!

"Are you going to France, Mamma?" asked Paul, his eyes sparkling.

"Papa in Sans! Papa in Sans!" echoed Winnie.

"Not yet, dear, but one of these days, when Paul can read and write well,—as well as Mamma,—then we will go to France."

What consoling rest she drank in, as they glided out of the slip on the sound boat and she felt the first whiff of the salt breeze. If she had been one of the park eagles beating its dismantled wings against its cage and suddenly finding itself free to soar into the blue ether, she could not have experienced a more panting desire to speed onward than she did, as the majestic steamer, clearing the East river, floated out into the Sound.

The low Connecticut shores on the left, rising dreamily from the water's edge, the yellow sand cliffs of Long Island looming golden against the Venetian blueness of the sky, the revolving lights, now red, now white, the damp softness of the cool evening air, and on in front, the vague and endless stretch of water inclosed her comfortingly with her children —somewhat as if her tired spirit had glided with its beloved into a new world.

Ahead of her, on the other side of the boat, she saw some former friends. They looked over and bowed gaily and cordially. She thanked them in her heart for making no further effort.

As the night folded them in, Winifred nestled close against her bosom, and Paul stole his hand into hers. She pressed it tenderly, and then he leaned against her, and, pointing to where the starry sky sank into the misty, distant sea, said:

"Dear Mamma, perhaps we are sailing on the beautiful river of death. Do you think this is that river, Mamma?"

"Perhaps, dear. Who knows."

"When shall we know, Mamma?"

"We can never tell, dearest, before landing. But if it is, Paul, you know where it leads."

"Yes," said Paul, reverently, and gazed with steadfast eyes into the space ahead.

By and by, his head sank heavily against her shoulder.

When the children were both asleep, she wrapped a rug about them, glad to let them breathe as late as possible the sweet saltness of the air.

When the decks were almost deserted, she roused Paul, and lifting Winifred in her arms, no light weight, she carried her to their state-room, Paul clinging sleepily to her side.

The captain was in the saloon with two or three other gentlemen. They paused involuntarily in their conversation and bowed, and then looked beyond Madeline. They all knew her. Not one but felt better as he looked. The sadness of her mouth was softened, her eyes shone with maternal tenderness. Something in the still youthful slightness of her figure, and the gentle, calm pose of her graceful head awakened sympathy.

She sat down to undress her baby.

Winifred cried a little, and finally broke into a persistent wail of discomfort which she could not soothe.

"Climb up into your berth, dear," said Madeline to Paul, when he rose from his little prayer.

"Will you sing to us then, Mamma?"

"No, dear; not here."

"Why not?"

"Sing, sing," said Winifred.

She hesitated, and looked out into the cabin; no one was there. Why not, indeed, if they wanted it?

So, laying Winifred in her berth, and kneeling beside her, Paul leaning over and looking at her admiringly, as if he were a cherub hovering in benediction, she sang. She loved old-fashioned melodies, and hymns full of fervid feeling and adoration. She began in a low, soothing tone:

"When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died."

Before she had finished, Paul had sunk down into his pillow in a sweet sleep, and Winifred's snowy lids had curtained her blue eyes.

They traveled all the next day. They crossed the undulating dreariness of central Maine, passed through stretches of wood, a remnant only of those primeval forests that once afforded masts to stem the tempests of all seas. When night came, they halted in Bangor. They stayed there a few days, growing stronger in the bracing coolness of its healthful air, wandering or driving for hours through its shady, old-fashioned streets, Paul asking many a question about the roomy white homesteads with their green blinds and cumbersome knockers, Winifred plunging her happy, toddling feet into the cushiony turf growing through the centers of the broad streets, or trying to step on the flickering shadows that played under the drooping, meeting elms.

But Madeline had not gone far enough yet.

So they took the train again, speeding northeast to the pine forests of New Brunswick. During the latter part of their journey, they were the only passengers in the car. The door was wide open. They jolted over the uneven road, at the rate of ten miles an hour. There was no dust. The brakeman was a garrulous, half-grown boy.

Madeline sat down on the door-sill, Paul wedged in behind her, Winifred on her lap.

The newness of the country, the great stretches of forest, unbroken, save by the wavering, uneven track extending in a straight line far as the eye could reach, the huckleberry bushes by the wayside laden with their shimmering blue fruit, the balsamic fragrance of the air, and the paler skies of the northern latitude, all gave her a sense of freedom and removal.

Paul asked many a question, and the brakeman told him yarns of wild beasts and Indians that made the little fellow peer into the vistas of the forest with pleasing dread.

By and by they came to a placid lake, deep and blue and wide, hemmed in by sheltering mountains whose wooded sides were unbroken by dwelling or clearing.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Madeline, leaning out.

"Think so?" asked the brakeman. He turned and looked at the lake critically.

"I don't see how you can keep your eyes off it, even if you do pass it every day."

"I never thought anythin' o' it before. S'pose I'm used ter et. Good fishin' ther, though. My, but this ain't anythin' to what yer a comin' to!"

"Soon?" cried Paul.

The boy shook his head oracularly. And suddenly, almost without warning of the change, right and

left, the salt, sparkling water of Passamaquoddy bay met their vision. To the right rose a long mound-like island, dotted with a solitary house and barns. Far beyond, meeting the gleaming afternoon sky, cliffs of brilliant red, fading into cream impinged over innumerable straits and channels. Everywhere, as the travelers curved in and out on the train, they beheld islands of all shapes and sizes along the winding shore. They came, at last, upon a small, wooded neck of land, a long, narrow island in front of it, like a kind of natural breakwater, and a rambling, moss-grown old-town stretching itself out in the sun along the shore. Madeline knew, then, that they were at St. Andrews. She felt also, with a thrill of relief, that she was as isolated as she could wish in the quaint fishing-town whose glory had departed at the beginning of the century.

There was no hotel, and she had engaged board in a Scotch family whose staid and rigid ways suggested her Uncle Middleton. But, hundreds of miles away from him, the resemblance did not disturb her. She felt safe and sheltered, too, when she gathered at night with Paul and Winifred around the family altar with the widow and her children. She liked the quaintness of bowing reverently and standing for a blessing before and after every meal.

For the rest, Paul and Winifred revelled in the great feather bed they slept in, and Madeline herself

did not find it come amiss during those summer nights which had almost a touch of frost in their coolness. Paul stretched his legs and grew strong climbing up and down the yellow posts of his bedstead, which touched the very ceiling.

They spent the days out of doors, the mother reading or thinking under the shade of her umbrella, the children playing in the sand. They learned to watch and love the far-reaching and wonderful tides; when these came in late in the afternoon, they strolled along the deserted and decaying wharves and, sitting down, many feet above the water at first, watched the tide rise and rise till it threatened to submerge the little town.

They spent whole days in a low carriage, a stout Canadian pony to draw them, and, driving in every direction, would reach home only at nightfall.

Sometimes they ate their mid-day meal along the banks of the St. Croix, its majestic width and volume near its mouth reminding the retrospective mother of the Hudson. Then again, they would take a little boat and row out to one of the numerous islands, exploring it near the shore, and coming back laden with ferns and berries. Once in a great while Madeline would take the children down the bay in the diminutive steamboat that touched at St. Andrews, and Paul was never weary of watching the miniature whirlpools so frequent in Passamaquoddy,

or of sailing through the shoals of herring that sparkled in the sunlight like a vast piece of molten silver, or of discovering some mysterious mirage peculiar to those waters.

Days and weeks passed and still they lingered. The children had never been so happy, and Madeline, busy with the daily care of them, had less time to think. In those almost sylvan solitudes, her sorrows were really less corroding.

The gray hairs gathered all summer, but, notwithstanding, she gained in flesh and beauty. The high vitality which had marked all her movements before her trouble came, was less apparent. It was a transmuted force only, visible in the sad intensity of her eyes, the occasional compression of her lips, and a kind of ceaseless solicitude for her children. Like the rush of some vast stream through a narrow canyon, her whole nature was becoming absorbed in a consuming maternal passion. Unconsciously, she was giving way to the trend of her temperament, which craved and sought an absorbing interest in one form or another.

The charities in which she had begun to take an interest, before leaving the city, occupied her thought less and less. It grew hard for her to even write to the unfortunate ones whom her crushed heart had first sought out, in its extremity. The fascination of her isolation grew upon her more and more. Some-

times she wandered from one fine view to another, considering whether she would buy a plot of ground and build a house and involve herself and her children in a seclusion that the short summers and the long, bitter winters would render well nigh impenetrable. She fancied what her possession of them would be—a northern, ice-fraught wind howling around their exile—a great fire-place aglow with pine logs—books and music—and on Sundays, worship in the little English church at St. Andrews.

October came, and still she nursed this fancy, as an idle one, it is true, but finally she reached the point when she asked Paul if he would like to live in St. Andrews. He screamed with delight, a vision of a cart drawn by a Newfoundland dog, in which noble animal the place abounded, summing up life to him.

She herself hardly knew how it came about, but, in another week, she had bought a few acres of ground where the St. Croix rushes in a wide blue current into Passamaquoddy bay. A belt of pines shut off the cold north. The south and west faced the water, the sunshine and the warmth, and the sloping land to the east was like a great hand of mother earth held gently upward as if to protect this favored spot from the sea winds.

Labor was cheap in St. Andrews and work a godsend, and so, notwithstanding the season, the cellar was at once begun with fair prospects of having the

house inclosed before the winter became too severe. Many hands hastened the work, and with December there was much visible promise of the new home.

Meanwhile, the children, wrapped in furs, and out-of-doors all day, grew into such a bloom of sturdy beauty that they became the romantic favorites of the little village, and the mother a potential dignitary, whose glory completely overshadowed that of the colonial titled lady stranded in St. Andrews.

One bright morning, the last on which work could be done on the house for the winter, she left Paul to walk with Winifred, while she ran up over a slope to examine a load of redolent cedar with which closets were to be lined, and which was to be stored to season during the cold weather. Paul was as good a nurse as she, and so thoughtful that she felt no fear in leaving the children alone for a half hour. So, blanketing their stout, white pony, she bade them keep moving, kissed them good-bye and left them, but with many a loving, backward glance.

The tide was still far out, so Paul went on the smooth, hard sand, running with his wee sister up and down the curving shore.

A pile of rocks, still unsubmerged, shone in the sunlight, and thither, attracted by the sea-weed and shells stored among the crevices, the little fellow, after a while, led Winifred.

Sturdy and sure of foot, they climbed up to a sheltering hollow. There, lying in a sand-lined nook, was a dead gull, its white wings torn, its snowy breast stained with blood. Some hunter's shot had killed it.

"Winnie and Paul will bury the poor, poor bird," said the brother, his grave little face assuming a reverent melancholy.

"Es, es!" and Winifred sat down on the rock.

Paul began to scoop the sand out. When the grave was dug and the birdie placed within, he repeated what part of the burial service he could remember, Winnie crying effusively.

When they had finished, and had outlined a cross with pebbles at the head of the little mound, they still lingered, gathering the shells and sea-weed strewn near the gull's grave.

Then Paul took Winifred's hand, and, leading her to the summit of the rocks, looked down—and lo, the sea was everywhere!

One of the great tides of the Bay of Fundy had crept in suddenly, and still it was rising.

How often had Madeline pointed to the notches indicating these floods. Paul's mind, youthful as it was, realized with unspeakable horror that a wall of water, thirty feet high, would cover the ground above low tide.

He clasped his little sister in his arms, who laughed with delight over the sparkling waters everywhere, and with uplifted head cried—"Mamma—Mamma!"

When had that cry ever failed to bring succor? He believed that, somehow, his mamma could reach her children.

Still Madeline lingered, lingered in the corner where the parlor would be. She half smiled as she pictured the life in that room the next winter. The cruel north wind sweeping round the frame with a wolfish howl made the scene all the more real. That cruel wind swept on, on to the rocks, and, catching up Paul's cry on its vanishing wings, carried it out to sea.

Higher rose the water, till it rippled through the crevices and licked the little toes pressed close together.

Winnie looked up and smiled, half confidently, half afraid.

Paul held his arm around her, but Paul looked so sad. When a tear dropped over his lids, Winnie's lips trembled, and nestling to him, she murmured, "Paul not cry! Paul not cry!"

"Call Mamma, Mamma! Loud! So loud! And I will call Jesus," said Paul.

Out upon the wintry air, one voice trembling with fear the other with sympathy, rang the childish

treble—"Mamma! Mamma! Jesus! Jesus! Dear Jesus!"

Madeline's dreamy ear caught a sound that was not the wind, and, startled, she looked up a second. Then a responsive thrill crept through her, and she rushed out and up the hill. "The children!" she cried to the men who hastened after.

Up and down the shore she looked. Then, in a second, she beheld two little figures half submerged on those cold, bleak rocks. Her shuddering heart heard that combined wail, and then, even as Paul saw her rush toward the water, and he believed that help had come through his own mamma, the current eddying over his foothold rose suddenly higher, and as it trembled as if to gather volume, his feet slipped, and out, seaward, he floated, with Winnie in his arms.

How those cruel waters played with the frail bodies, rocking them now this way and now that as they sank and rose. Then a great wave swept them apart, and Madeline uttered one long, despairing wail as she saw her tender baby dashed against a jutting tooth of granite.

Another swell brought them half way in, and then receding, carried them with it, just as a lumberman who had waded out to his depth, stretched forth a hand to grasp Paul's little coat.

No boat anywhere!

Two brave men now plunged into the icy flood, and swam to where the tide was wafting the little ones with each ebb further and further out, but when they reached those unconscious forms, a hugh billow, more friendly or more capricious, floated the children on its crest and washed them up on the sand—up to Madeline's very feet.

She threw out her arms in a long heart-piercing wail, and fell beside them.

"Here, you, Geordie, gie a hond to carry her up to Anne Sackett's. An' Davie, an' Allen, tek, each o' ye, a leetle one an' hurry arter uns."

The procession started over the sand and the sere grass of a neighboring slope to a fisherman's cottage nestling on the other side. Anne Sackett herself saw them coming, from the one little window facing seaward. She stood in the doorway to bid them enter, when they approached. Well she knew the meaning of such a group.

"Mair sorrow, Geordie? What, the city bairns who wur here ony yester, an' warmin' their bonny hands before my fire? An' the puir mither! All dead taegether!"

"The mither is nae dead; but the bairns be, wi' out doot. But we'll see what rubbin' an' warmin' will do."

"Strip her wet claethes from her winsome body," said Allen to Davie, who laid Winnie on the stone

hearth before the fire. "She be dead, puir blossom. Ay, an' my boy, too," he added, pointing to a wound on Paul's temple. "They hae been in that freezin' water too long, if ther wur nae ither hurt. The twa were dashed agin the rocks. I see it wi' mi own een."

Those rough but tender men chafed the children in vain. Anne Sackett meanwhile busied herself with Madeline, who had been laid on a bed in a corner opposite the fire.

"She'll be in no common trouble," said Anne, as she chafed Madeline's cold hands. "It's a kind we're used to here in St. Andrews, hey, Davie, this heart-breken that the sea meks?"

"Aye, aye, Anne. But I hae nae doot but she hae seen sair trouble afore this. She'd ne'r a hankered to bury her children an hersen in St. Andrews. I sed when she begun her house, an' I say it again. Luk at her young face and her gray hairs. Those deep eyes o' hern hed heart-brek in 'em afore this loss o' the bairns."

"It may be; it may be! But she's nae sae used to sorrow but she'll hae a hard wakin' up. What wad Heaven mean, though, ef the airth hed nae sea?"

"Aye, aye," said Davie, reverently. "She'll understand Revelations now, as well as though she war a rael St. Andrews' woman. See her puir lids tremble. Turn her een away fro' the bairns."

CHAPTER VII.

RETROSPECTION.

WITH consciousness came an immediate and almost overwhelming terror. But her nerves made no second recoil, when Anne told her that the bairns were dead.

The men stepped wordlessly aside, as she leaned over the little forms still stretched before the huge fire.

"Anne," she said, after she had tenderly examined the children, "if you will give me some blankets to wrap my babies in, Davie and Allen will carry them home for me."

"No, no," said Madeline, with a touch of impatience in her voice, as they told her that the carriage was at the door. "I could not ride in that. It is not far for strong men like Davie and Allen. I will walk beside them."

Anne Sackett stood in the door, shading her eyes with her hand, as the little group started down the white road leading along the shore. She shook her

head as she saw Madeline's form sway under a strong gust of wind. The men walked with faces bent solemnly over their burden.

"She looks struck in death hersen, eh, Geordie? But see her step. Firm as an Indian's! But her heart's as dead as yon tree; the gale will snap it from its root some day, an' I'm a thinkin the American leddy 'll fare the same. It's a sair day fur a woman when she canna cry, nor wish to hev her say over her afflictions. She's ben like some old man wi's fut weel in the grave o'er the bairns, ever sin she opened her solemn eyes."

"She'll live, she'll live!" said Geordie, setting his lips. "But I'm thinkin' she'll be like the stone o' the top o' Chamcook yender—hard an' cold, wi' no growth of tender life anywhar. Yet what a breath of Heaven's vera own air blaws round the mountain top. P'raps she needed the hand o' the Lord."

"Hush, Geordie; I dinna b'lieve it. I dinna b'lieve its an afflictin' hand. An I think ye do wrang to interpret the Lord when he allers prefers to work in secret. I tek it, it war a vary cowardly thing for Job's friends to be sae sure of the reason he hed occasion to set on an ash heap."

"I war sayin' nothin' agin the leddy, but she be human, and we be all afflicted, avery one!" said Geordie, impatiently. "I be sorry for her, from my vary heart, I be!"

"It wud be better for us both to be prayin' than to bejedgin' either the Lord or his childern. There! The puir thing is out o' sight. Puir bleedin' heart!" and Anne, wiping her eyes, went back into the cottage.

"There is nothing more to do!" This is what Madeline said a week later to herself. She had laid her children beside others, young and old, who had been translated from St. Andrews. It was better so! Their short lives had meant little to any one but herself, and so she put them to sleep under the skies where they had grown strong and where they had been so happy, and under which her reveries would see them during the long, long childless days to come.

There was little possibility that she could ever sell the house she had begun, and so she decided to leave it just as it was, and go away—go back! She would have preferred to travel on into those wilds stretching to the east and north, but a half-forgotten duty called her south with the grim restlessness of a nemesis. Duty thus far had been hard and cold. So was Madeline hard and cold again, and with little of the tremendous courage which had risen for the emergency a year before. She faced her duty because of her native rectitude. With the children gone, there was nothing else, and a duty, however unpleasant, was as easy as living.

Do you ask whether no love whatever for her husband impelled her? Yes; she loved him still.

Love has stages, and phases in which it is more sure of itself when absent from the beloved. Under totally different conditions, and with the pressure removed which too strong a sense of either pity or disgrace fosters in an independent nature, Madeline could forgive, and, what was pleasanter to her selfish nature, forget. Never for a minute to be able to forget, and yet to forgive,—there was the difficulty. This was the possibility to which she was returning. She experienced a kind of despairing triumph, as her journey brought her nearer and nearer home, that she felt so little and cared so little. She looked reckless. She had no thought of being reckless. The provocation, though, was all that was needed.

She bought a Boston paper, reading it with painful minuteness. By-and-by, she came to the operatic news. There was a half column given to "The Flying Dutchman." Her past life seemed as endless, and the possible thirty or forty years yet to come as interminable and as unappropriated as the ages through which the accursed sailor wandered a stranger on the seas. Her time she could give, as that phantom gave his to steering a ship that could never sink. But herself—a possession of which she could never be rid. It had loomed up as large and as self-asserting and more unhappy than ever. Charity?

Others more suffering? She thought her very touch must freeze. While she was thus thinking, the New York papers were brought in.

"Buy a paper, ma'am?" and a bright-eyed boy held out a daily.

She glanced at it idly; her gaze fell on "Jacob Middleton." That was all. Why was her uncle in the papers? she wondered, as she opened her purse. Turning her chair with its back to the aisle, she read:

"Jacob Middleton died suddenly at his home on Fifth avenue, on Thursday morning. He was confined to the house for some time, the past summer, by a severe attack of illness, but recovered sufficiently to resume his business. Although feeling indisposed of late, he has not absented himself from his office, and was preparing to go there when he was suddenly taken ill. His physician was summoned, but he died in a few hours. Mr. Middleton was born at Woolston, Vt., where he lived till he was fourteen years old, when, having lost both his parents, he came to New York. Here he has ever since remained, gradually rising through his business ability and strict integrity to positions of prominence and great responsibility. He was president of the Knickerbocker Bank Note Company, a director of the Ubiquitous Life Insurance Company, vice-president of the Guaranteed Postal Telegraph, Limited, and prominent in the chief organized charities of his denomination. His property, though not large according to the vast fortunes of these days, nevertheless provides handsomely for the following: Harvard University, $100,000; Christianization of Madagascar, $10,000; spread of current news in the Azores, $75,000; scholarship endowments for twenty-five colleges, $225,000; new town hall in Woolston, Vt., $7,000; building and endowment of church property in Alaska, $140,000; Mr. Middleton's only surviving relative is Mrs.

Henry P. Winchester, who is said to have an ample fortune in her own right, and to have fully concurred in her uncle's noble charities. Mrs. Winchester is wintering in Algiers."

The paper dropped from her hands. A ringing dizziness made her close her eyes. She saw her Uncle Middleton as he had sat leaning toward her on that day when she came back from the prison. She heard his carriage roll away. Then out from the past came one and another disjointed memories. A straight-backed seat in church, and she, a little girl, sitting beside her uncle, her short, white skirts spread over her lap, one hand in his, and her feet falling asleep through the long service. Then she saw him on his knees at family prayers in the days when her aunt was living. Dear, gentle Aunt Mary! Madeline's heart unconsciously said, her ears full of his measured, solemn prayers. Then there was the first and last time she had ever seen tears in his eyes, that day they came back to his big, empty house after Aunt Mary's funeral; those tears had awed her, shocked her with a sense of something awful. Then the Sunday night teas in her own home, with Uncle Middleton always at her right hand and insisting on taking his tea directly from her, with a just perceptible softening of his pale blue honest eyes which gave her a sense that he loved her with a dogged faithfulness that was blind even to her faults. How those memories stirred in her heart.

She turned her head to one side and opened her eyes, trying to choke off the spell, but the procession of past events moved on just the same. She seemed to see her uncle for the first time in her life as some one altogether outside of her own interests. Side by side with him now appeared her husband, from whose personality, heretofore, she had never been able to separate her own. Then she herself stood there—yes, she, Madeline!—all of them before her for judgment.

She saw their faces; she viewed their acts; she constructed their motives. Strange metamorphosis! There was more substantial goodness, the ring of a truer personality about Jacob Middleton than about either of the other two. A self denying, temperate life; a rigid adherence to a sense of duty; a stainless name and lawfully acquired wealth. Nothing indeed about it all to awaken great admiration; but it was such an old uncle as this who had loved her. What was Henry to him abstractly? What moral obligation had her Uncle Middleton ever been under to Henry? Yet, if acts counted for anything, it was this uncle who had supplemented Henry's business inexperience; it was two-thirds of that rigid, self-denying life that had backed Henry's pleasure-loving youth and early manhood. It was this old man, her uncle, who, loving her so much, had, because of that love, taken her husband so entirely for granted. The first

time that he had faltered, and broken, and sinned,—yes, Madeline's judgment reiterated, sinned,—she had turned from him with whose life her's had been so intensely interwoven, and had had no mercy for the provocation. Then she felt impelled to balance trait for trait; self-denial with self-seeking; frugality with prodigality; a man to whom God was ever his judge with a man to whom Wall and Broad streets were law and gospel. On one hand a narrow man, and on the other a man just as narrow; between them a woman who was moral ballast to neither. It was such a woman who forgave the one and refused even a pitying word to the age of the other.

The Madeline who saw these three persons before her tribunal, found none of them greatly deserving, but that outside Madeline found something more and more tangibly good about the old man silent in his grave than about either of the other two who had been overtaken in their self-seeking.

Her pride took alarm. Had she wanted her Uncle Middleton's money after all? No, no! She was only too glad that it was scattered literally to the four winds. Not that! Not that! She had money enough for all her simple needs, and how simple they seemed compared with her past luxury. She had enough to live on in some quiet country place—till—and could save a little from her income, too—for the larger need that would come with her husband at liberty.

Thus her thoughts ran on and on, and the train hurried over the tracks, and the night came; then the train stopped and every one got out, and Madeline rose and went into the night with a heart in which reigned the blackness of a great darkness.

She had intended to go to a hotel on her arrival, but a blind, unreasoning fear overtook her, as she stepped into the station. For the first time, her self-reliance failed. She could not go alone to a hotel. But where should she go? "The world thinks I am in Algiers—my world!" And to herself, she seemed to break into a wild, mocking laugh.

She hurried through the station, forgetful of baggage, forgetful of everything but the fact that she was afraid. She reeled all at once against a wall as she entered an arched way leading to the street. A policeman stepped up and looked curiously at her.

"Call a cab for me," she whispered.

"Where do you want to go?" asked the policeman as he helped her in.

Then she thought of Mrs. Saxby. She thought of her kiss and of her tears, and she gave the number of Mrs. Saxby's house.

The new motion, and the fresh air, restored her partially.

On entering the house, the lofty hall, the brilliant light, the staid butler, the warmth and silence and splendor of the interior all smote her with a strange,

far-away reality. She walked into the empty drawing-room as if in a dream; and like a reflection outside a window, apart and surrounded by the darkness, but bright and clear, and so vivid, she seemed to see the old-fashioned maple bedstead with its white valance, high posts and feathery softness, and two rosy little faces cheek to cheek, sound asleep.

She put her hand to her forehead and rubbed her eyes, but still her feet trod the soft carpet—still that bed with her little ones asleep in it, floated beside her. How did she get there, she began to ask herself, or was she in St. Andrews?

When Rebecca Saxby glided into the room, her gray dinner dress trailing its soft luster, her white, jeweled hands extended to greet Madeline, she found Mrs. Winchester in the middle of the floor, her dilated eyes wandering right and left in puzzled, solicitous wonder.

Madeline lifted both hands to her eyes and pressed them and looked again as Rebecca came forward, advancing rapidly down the great length of the room. She stood still, her black garments outlining her fragile figure, her wandering eyes gleaming brighter for the paleness of her face.

Rebecca's heart palpitated with tender dread, as she put her arm around Madeline.

"Dear, this is so sweet, so good of you. Come right up stairs with me."

Madeline's lips quivered. Somewhere into the unseen, that bed with its lost treasures vanished. With the need for mother-love and mother-care gone, and the cruel present weighing with awful force upon her weakness, the ebbing strength which she had summoned with heroic force in the cool drive through the city, left her, and, with a long, gasping, moaning sob, she threw herself into Rebecca's arms.

There is nothing sweeter, more restful or more healing than the friendship of one true woman for another in a time of great need. Then it is that the tenderness usually reserved for husband and children wells over in a stream of comforting care and almost jealous watchfulness that makes the bond ten-fold what it ever was before.

Rebecca waved the butler out of sight as she led Madeline into the hall and supported her up the stairs. The soft pressure of her arm, her murmured endearments, soothed the aching, lonely heart. Rebecca undressed Madeline herself, chafing the cold feet with her warm hands, straightening out the long hair so streaked with gray, and making the thick braid bonny with a bright ribbon.

When Madeline lay down between the fragrant sheets, feeling the restfulness that came from crying, Rebecca sat beside her holding in her own warm palm the nervous hand of the sick woman, stroking it

gently when the quivering nerves gave a spasmodic twitch, and saying, "Cry more, dear. Cry yourself to sleep."

"Dear Mrs. Saxby," said Madeline, and then sobbed a little, helplessly.

"Say 'dear Rebecca,' please," and Mrs. Saxby bent over and kissed her. "You want some one nearer than Mrs. Saxby just now, and I feel so near to you, dear."

"Dear Rebecca, I think God sent me here to-night."

"I am sure he did. There, there!" as Madeline began to sob violently.

The swollen lids dropped finally over the weary eyes. The nervous hand fell helplessly on the counterpane. A long, halting, tired sigh crept from the tremulous mouth, too sad just now to show a trace of its proud endurance, and Madeline sank into a troubled sleep.

Day followed day and still she lay there with no visible ailment, but too weak to sit up. She cried a great deal, but said little.

Out of one tender woman's strength, still untried by sorrow or misfortune, but with a simple, childish buoyancy that lavished its overflow with artless sweetness, another woman, with deeper founts of

feeling, drew a healing insight into possibilities adapted to the common needs of life, and which she had hitherto thought lightly of.

What would the world do without the ordinary men and women? What would little children do without these tender hearted, practical natures that are interested in a thousand homely details and consequently create most of the beauty of our every-day life?

When Madeline was at length able to sit up, and, after much coaxing, consented to drive with her friend in the park in the early morning while it was not frequented, her strength returned, and, with it, her convictions of duty. She grew restless. She grew afraid of indulging herself in the luxury of Rebecca's tenderness; it was too relaxing for her needs.

There is a depleting power in even true sentiment directed toward misfortune, unless it can lift the cloud or suggest an immediate issue out of the difficulty. Hence men with strong physical natures, instinctively realizing their own powerlessness to rise above grief or loss, go away, and when they return, even if they show scars, return well enough for the purposes of their life. Highly sensitive organizations without the balance of well-poised nerves, sit and brood over their insulated griefs, until their microcosm becomes a mighty world, and then their case is a hopeless one.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRISON LADY.

ONE morning early in January, Madeline announced her intention to depart.

Rebecca, with a wise friendship, did not discourage her. But she did say:

"You must come to me, dear, whenever you feel overstrained or discouraged."

"No, not for a long time, at least. I want to be forgotten in New York."

"Not that, surely. You only want to forget yourself. That will make all the difference in the world."

"Everything is too personal, Rebecca, to make forgetfulness possible. At first I thought I could brace myself to sorrow. It was like this with me a year ago." She opened the book she had been reading. "Listen:"

"How could she believe in sorrow? If it attacked her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or to run away from it, as she had done already. Anything seemed more possible than that she should go on bearing miseries great or small."

"I tried to crush it, Rebecca; I defied it from the moment my attention turned to my children. For their sakes, I ran away from it. It overtook me. It will be my companion for life. I see it, now. I am just to go on, year after year, bearing my great misery, and it will bring the train of little ones. Feeling so, it is better to go away, even if it were not my duty."

"Yes, dear, it is better. Still, you must conquer this condition; it isn't healthful."

"Yes, I think it is," and Madeline shook her head mournfully. "I want to keep myself in a passive acceptance of the inevitable. I am not strong enough to hope; but I think I am strong enough to be hopeless."

"Why, dear, there is no such thing as the inevitable," said Rebecca, with the optimism of the happy. "If I believed that, I would never lift a finger. Think, my darling, you have decided to be strong for two. To do that, you must be cheerful, and of course you cannot be cheerful unless you are hopeful."

"Ah, I can pretend for Henry's sake for an hour or two at a time; but it means hours of solitude to get ready for it. I have thought it all out. I only feel safe in expecting nothing."

Rebecca stroked Madeline's hand tenderly. "You poor, wounded bird!" Kissing her friend, she left the room.

Madeline departed the next day. She traveled the old road with its double memories again.

It had been a good thing for her to be ill, although the more sensitive condition she found herself in fretted her sadly. Tears were too near the surface.

She did not intend to go to see her husband immediately on her arrival. She had no definite plan about him except that she expected to live near him, and then, when he was released, to go away with him.

All that day she wandered through the pleasant town with its broad streets on the hill slope basking in the brilliant wintry sunlight. The ground was covered here and there with patches of ice. Everything looked bright and calm and cold, as she would after she had fortified herself anew.

She found, toward night, a furnished cottage in the heart of the town, but with an outlook over the river and the hilly land beyond. Her former love of room and luxury taking possession of her, she hesitated a few minutes over whether its meager space was sufficient. She took it, however. The less she had, the simpler her personal life, the better. This instinctive effort toward stoicism and self-denial was wholesome, although to Rebecca it indicated a sadly morbid condition.

Whoever passes from one extreme to another, except in an extreme way? Upheavals, whether inward or outward, imply radical conditions.

She settled down in thought and in reality to a simple, uneventful existence, unbroken by calls or letters. By spring, she had, to all intents and purposes, obliterated her past life. She had resumed her monthly visits to the prison. She did not get used to them, but she accepted them as inevitable facts for herself, and a necessary amenity for her husband.

Her simple life induced still simpler habits of dressing. She grew interested in saving money for the final great need. Thus it happened, that without prevision, she assumed a costume that required little thought, meant almost no outlay, and was in consonance with the conditions of her life. Her black dress without plait or other trimmings clung to her in unadorned straightness. For the rest, her linen cuffs, a black shawl, and a simple black bonnet with its nun-like veil, completed her outfit.

Weeks and months passed. Her face wore an inflexible calmness. It was hard and cold. A kind of stillness ensued when she stepped into the small shop to supply the needs of her simple housekeeping. After a while, quite unknown to herself, she was called "the prison lady." Many a heart ached for her. Sometimes a wife, kneeling at night to say her prayers, in petitioning for her own husband, good and kind and honest, sent up a prayer for that solitary woman upon whose loneliness she dared not intrude.

Spring and summer passed away. Two years were gone. The sere leaves strewing the large avenues and rattling down the slopes under the November winds, made her think of the double grave far away on that Canadian shore. It was almost a year now that she had been without her darlings. It was nearly a year since she had seen Rebecca. She had hardly spoken to a soul in months except the prison people and the shop-keeper. She had had books and magazines and newspapers, but they now refused the solace of forgetfulness. The sight of a book made her weary. The thought of going to bed filled her with dread. The long, sleepless hours, the heavy stupor with the dawn, the wild chasing of myriad thoughts through her mind, and her attention refusing to linger on any—she knew it all, and it filled her with horror.

No temptation had ever seized her to lengthen her walks or modify her life. As it had begun, so it should continue to the end! And yet, how was she to endure the coming years? Their possibility inspired her with unspeakable melancholy.

She had reached a point, although she did not know it, when she had exhausted her resources. All the reserve force of her nature had been used, over and over. She felt a kind of spiritual and mental atrophy. At first, when the world despised or pitied her misfortune and her husband's disgrace, she had said,

even while her heart bled, "What matters it? I am sufficient unto myself for all these bitter emergencies." Then, when, with the children to love and protect, she had turned waveringly to God, and he had taken the children from her, she ceased to pray, and braced her very being against expectation.

Her breaking heart, in the visits she paid her husband, had harrowed him, until, unknown to her, his nights overburdened with remorse, and his days with manual labor too severe for his constitution he was just as surely verging on physical prostration and mental imbecility as she was losing the power to either feel or think.

With a startled horror in the rare moments now when she was susceptible, she realized the intellectual degradation attending apathy. Why, that was the condition of the men and women in the prison wards. The more desperate they were in wickedness, the more entire their hardness. A year before, Madeline had accused herself, over and over, of guilt equal with her husband's. She had abandoned such a conclusion through a rough logic, which separated the act from remote causes. Her own self-judgment became one thing, and that of the world another. In other words, she felt acquitted of guilt before her fellow-creatures, whatever the verdict of her conscience. As the poignancy of her remorse softened and she approached Henry less and less as a partner

in his crime, the sense of the sacredness of the vows she had assumed in marriage kept her from faltering, even in thought, from the outward claims of that union. Nevertheless, theories, new and heterodox, but coming back with a strange persistency, and then drifting away with aggravating vagueness from her tired brain, had recurred to her.

Was marriage a kind of fetich worship to many people? Was a woman a Hindoo suttee? Was a wife's life to be warped or twisted out of harmonious social relations, or to be stained irremediably, because of a husband? Was not that what Uncle Jacob Middleton had thought? No, not just that! He would have severed one from the other absolutely. That was not what she meant. What was it?

She kneeled by her window, her face bowed on her clasped hands, her melancholy eyes watching the rushing wind clouds hurrying across the moonlit sky.

Was it this? She looked into those starry depths as though she would question God himself. Was it not to stand side by side with her husband to the end, to suffer with him and to support him through love? And yet, notwithstanding, to grow into all that she could possibly be in and for herself. Was it this?

Many a woman less intellectual, and with far less moral stamina than Madeline had, would have reached such a conclusion intuitively, but her conduct

would never have equaled her intuitions. An act always represents the dynamic force of the conviction and decision preceding it.

With a sudden, awful realization that her circumstances were becoming the measure of a real, personal degeneracy, she gathered her dormant energies together and sat in sternest judgment on herself.

Had she not read till she could read no more? Oh, yes, but what for! For forgetfulness. Had she not visited her husband whenever she was allowed? Oh, yes, but what good had she brought him! She recognized all at once his growing weakness, his contracted, hopeless view of life and self, his increasing love and craving for mere animal comforts, his almost senile rehearsal of the shameful past, and she saw her own effeminate acquiescence in all these states and conditions.

O, what kind of woman was she!

A sense of humility, to which she had been a stranger, stole over her. A warm desire to be noble and courageous, that had in it no sense of duty, animated her. Something which she was not filled her thought and awoke a spirit of simulation.

There, before the window, in the darkness, her senses thrilled by the solemn beauty of the river, the sky, the hills folding in and out in bright or gloomy outline, she cried for help. Nothing more definite! She had n't sufficient faith to make a particular

prayer, but somewhere must be a God who might, perhaps, in general ways, fortify. To pray for happiness, for peace, for comfort, for hope,—why, these things seemed just as impossible gifts, as that Henry was not in prison or never had been. But help she needed.

A week before, she would have laughed in very bitterness of spirit if some one had said to her, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Now the words occurred to her, as she knelt there, ashamed and emptied of herself. "O, if they were only true!" was all she could say.

The next day was Sunday. She slept very late. Her one little maid brought her breakfast to her room, as was the custom, if she overslept. She sat in her wrapper drinking her coffee and looking out over the wondrous panorama of sky and land and water, thinking with a dreamy wistfulness of her old home further up the river, of the little church there where they had worshiped. Many a sabbath had come and gone unnoticed the past year. They had meant nothing to her. But now a bell, sweet and mellow and solemn, cut the autumnal clearness of the air with an echoing melody. What music! Soon a chime of silver-toned bells rang out, "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

She suddenly covered her white, thin face with her hands. The tears that had been locked in icy depths burst their wintry bonds, and overflowed.

Then the tune changed, and while one bell tolled a sweet refrain, the chimes played, "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

O, she had heard them Sunday in and Sunday out, but they had never spoken to her before. She repeated the words again and again, "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

"Is such a nearness possible?" she asked herself, in all simplicity. Hours of prayer had been sweet to her esthetically. They had brought a certain comfort before her babies were taken, but to bring her nearer to God, to open a tangible, personal relation between Him and her, they had never even suggested such a possibility.

She got her prayer-book, and, kneeling, repeated the morning prayers aloud. They were very beautiful, and they did seem to embrace every form of petition; but something in her very heart was crying for its own expression. She laid her head on the bed and thought. Then she tried to make her own prayer, but all her life she had used the prayer-book only. No words came that meant anything to her. She yearned to say something—something *personal.*

"Nearer, my God, to Thee!" finally, she said aloud, and, with the effort, a great sob convulsed her. Her

pride was broken. Over and over and over she moaned with ever-increasing intensity, "Nearer, my God, to Thee!"

In her child-like ignorance of the blessedness coming from prayer, she cried out as questioningly and with the assumption of just as dark a mystery as those old Ephesians must have done when they erected their temples to the "Unknown God." Ah, He was unknown, but that native impulse, common to us all, and as impelling as famine, drove her in a right direction.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW SCENES.

WHO is this tall woman walking down the hilly streets of a town whose salient feature is a monstrous granite pile, loop-holed with small windows that overlook, on one side, the Hudson, and on the other an intricacy of railway-tracks, machine shops, and grimy soil? There is something familiar about those straight, black skirts, that clinging veil, and the long, free step. Shall we overtake her, and, in passing, gain a furtive glimpse of her face? Ah, we know that face! We saw it several years ago, swathed in sphinx-like sadness and gloom, as we were hurrying to take a train. We saw it on a sound-boat, too, imbued with the same awful sadness, but softened by the purest of all affections. Surely it is that face, and yet how strangely different. The elastic airiness of the step reveals something kindred in the expression. There are the uplifted eyes, with the same transparency of depth. The dark hair, while just as abundant, is plentifully intermixed with gray. See, the sunlight has fallen on two

silver bands outlining the temples. It is a very white,—no, not white, but very colorless face, and there are faint, arching lines across the forehead, and a tremulous droop about the chin. The pride of the mouth is redeemed—we might almost say sanctified—by its purity. We feel, as we look at that mouth, as if too much of the woman's humanity had been eliminated.

"Can you tell me, my good man, anything about that lady going down the street?"

"The prison leddy? A deal more 'n I ken about meself. Ef ye'll wait till I shovil this bit of airth, it'll be the time fer noon, an' I ken tell ye all yez wants to know, I reckon."

Michael spat on his hands, and, thus lubricated, he seized the shovel with them with mighty force, while the stranger stood at one side and watched the "prison lady" until she was lost to view.

"Wull," said Michael, at last, striding his short legs and resting his hands on his shovel, "she's this kind of a wummin. She's lived here goin' on five year, an' though she was more talked about, probable, than any other wummin I know on, she's more loved than ary other I ever heerd of. She could go anywhar, night or day, in this town. Everyone knows her by sight, an', whilst she's respeckit by all, there aint a poor, miser'ble cretur anywhar thet others hez given up but thet she's found an' helped.

My ole wummin thinks mayhap she's Mary the Mother o' Marcy herself come to bide a wee in the flesh; but thet's idolatry, an I've stopped her agoin' to sech lengths. I see yer a bit confused, sir, an' I'll come to the pint whar thee maist begin about the poor leddy. You've heern tell about Henry P. Winchester, sint up fur six year fur forgery! She's his wife! God pity her!"

Michael's diminutive blue eyes filled.

"Whan she fust kem here to look arter him, she lived like a heermit. Then she tuk to church goin', an' then the rector o' her church, who is a vary God-fearin' man, though I say it mesilf, an' a good Catholic, too, he ingaged her in good works among the poor; but, 'dade, sir, he found her feet so shod wid marcy whin she once begun thet he hed leetle need o' derectin' her. Thin she sings ivery Sunday to the prisoners, an' sech a meltin' sound ez thet is, I've heern tell. I've niver heerd her, but her v'ice is music whin she spakes; an' what must it be whin she sings? Thet's the sum an' substance o' the prison leddy, sir."

Meanwhile Madeline had passed the familiar portals and was closeted with her husband behind those walls for the last time.

"At eight this evening, a carriage will be sent for you, Henry, and to-morrow morning we will start for Quebec, and sail thence to Europe. Everything is ready."

"Everything but myself!"

He clasped his attenuated hands between his knees and closed his eyes.

"I thought I should die before to-day, and spare us both. This year of weakness without work has been the longest and the hardest. Madeline, you have been a saint. Send me off, to-morrow, anywhere, and then go back into the world to live your own life."

"Too much inner blessedness has come to me through our trouble, dearest, for me to be at rest anywhere but at your side."

"It can't be very long, Madeline." He looked up apologetically.

She gave him a smile of such sweet and tender assurance, that he turned away remorsefully. Who was this woman? Was she divine, that she could stay with him?

"I must go now, Henry. It is only a few hours more."

The next morning, at daybreak, Madeline gave the key of her cottage to her weeping maid to deliver to the owner, and before the town began to stir, they were speeding north on a fast express.

It cost her an effort to drop the convenient costume of years. She had torn herself with a wrench from the little cottage and the undeviating regularity of her daily life. Though she had been unhappy, she

had at length risen altogether superior to environment. It was also one thing to go to her husband for an hour at a time with a comforting presence. It might be quite another to try to live with him as an upholding presence. She did not doubt that her attention and care would fail, but, the spirit behind the attention and care? What that was, day and night, would be the measure of her helpfulness.

She thought that she had risen above mere physical needs and conditions; but, to her surprise, when they had started, she felt a thrill of freedom, a bodily elevation, an unpremeditated flow and rapidity of thought that did not modify her plans, but made her capable of their better execution.

Fortunately, they were the only occupants of the drawing-room car. Sometimes she rose and walked up and down, her kind and vigilant eyes upon her husband, who sat still, an invalid lassitude in his figure, his head back on the chair, his eyes seldom turning from the shifting scenery. She tried to fancy what his thoughts were, for his face gave her no hint in its somber and hopeless reticence. He had unlearned the power or the desire to communicate them. She had started for Europe without any plan beyond getting there; but, on that first day's journey, she made up her mind that they would travel as far and as rapidly as her husband's strength would allow. There is something in constant change of place that

weakens the sense of personal identity, and she saw in a flash, now, that this was what they both needed. The extreme and subjective limitations of her own life for the past five years made this as necessary for herself as for her husband—her child was her real thought.

On landing they made their way, by frequent and easy stages, southward.

Henry Winchester had not been abroad since he was a boy. At rare intervals a reflection from his youthful experiences would invest the present, and he would forget long enough to laugh and to fall into unrestrained conversation.

He took a sudden fancy, on reaching Dover, to stop there. No sooner, however, had Madeline, with pleased alacrity, given his room a touch of home by unpacking more than usual than he begged her to repack and take the next boat across the channel.

She felt tired.

There was an air of such cosy comfort about their great, low-ceiled rooms, the fire-place with the skin rug, the white drapery of the beds, the roomy tables, large enough to rest her arms in reading or writing, and, best of all, the soothing wash of the waves under the windows; she would have been so glad to stop a few days.

Anything was better, however, than the nervous restlessness seizing her husband at the most

unaccountable moments. Sometimes her ears rang all day with the suppressed groans that had awakened her in the middle of the night. Not even the sea, that balm for so many aches, had soothed him to the unbroken sleep which she saw was vitally necessary.

She repacked their trunks. Then she brought his coat and helped him on with it, brought his gloves and hat, and, donning her own wraps, said, with the hope of entertaining him till the time for crossing the channel arrived, "Come, let us walk on the pier."

He followed, like a child.

Do you wonder? For six years existence to him had meant unquestioning obedience and physical discomfort. Now he possessed physical comfort and companionship that was incarnate motherhood. He was in a condition to render implicit obedience, had Madeline commanded. That was furthest from her thought. Day by day, she felt and saw that the essence of manhood had departed. The striving for forgetfulness is such a negation of all the years that have gone. More and more she realized this.

To be tender to him, to lead him away from himself by the path that had brought her to peace, this was her prayer and her one effort.

The thousand homely devices she had to practice for the capricious moods of an invalid, linked her anew with the practical living that goes on like the tide, with undeviating recurrence.

They walked up and down the pier, up and down, up and down.

The wind blew a gale. The green waves looked solid and cold. The few sailors and maids who lingered in sunny spots for what seemed a bleak courtship, were the only ones to keep them company.

Madeline intended to walk there till her husband was physically exhausted, but it proved a sore task for her. Her nervous endurance was great. Her firm hand could control his shaking one; her patience could lead his fretfulness, but, notwithstanding, the interminable walks, which were his chief recreation, kept her foot-sore and overtasked much of the time.

She found a little amusement in the highkeyed English voices with their monotonous inflections. They reminded her of the tuning of a flute. She was never weary of studying the vivid color in the cheeks of young English women, or the plethoric, veined redness of the faces of older ones. The patches of bright pink, with the soaring white foreheads made her think of the impressionists with their vague dashes of intense color—all the finer for a little distance. Even the flowers in Dover seemed to have a wearisome vitality. The rose petals were thicker, the geranium blossoms were tougher, the life that run riot in door-yards and jardinieres belonged to the pale skies, the heavy, damp atmosphere, the

stone houses with their bright green shutters. She longed for a rose, half of whose loveliness lay in its exquisite fragility and penetrating fragrance. It seemed to her at times as if those English flowers might suddenly, before her very eyes, don a pair of stout walking boots and go out for a vigorous constitutional along the esplanade.

The channel was choppy and the air raw when they resumed their travel.

Again Madeline thought of the Flying Dutchman, and, for a second, a distant future projected itself upon her thought, when they would have traversed all seas and all countries and would begin the lengthy round anew. But this was an idle fancy, useless in its bitterness, and she dismissed it.

A couple of hours later, when they were ensconced, the sole passengers in the compartment, in the opposite corners of a first-class railway carriage, with the night folding its welcome darkness around them, she had a chance to rest. She awoke with the first gray light of the dawn. As they approached Paris her husband was still asleep.

He half sat, half reclined, in a weary, crouching heap in the corner. His head leaned forward on his chest. His traveling cap had fallen off. The oil lamp in the ceiling of the carriage shed a sickly light over his face, whose expression gave her a shock. She had seen it before, but it had been so fleeting. It

was an absolute vacuity—something like a shadow, an eclipse of intelligence, undefined, yet awfully pervasive.

She stood up and put on an extra shawl.

"Dear, my dearest, wake up. We are in Paris. Henry! Henry! Wake up; you are in Paris!"

He opened his eyes; looked at her with the sleepy stupidity of a child, then roused himself.

"I must have slept soundly. Lately I think I have been sleeping better, for my thoughts come so slowly when I waken. Let me see—did you say it was Paris?" He looked at her with furtive incredulity.

"Yes, dear, Paris!"

There was enough in Paris to make them linger many days. They chanced upon no one whom they had ever known. Madeline's fear of encountering former friends became quiescent; but her loneliness was intense. A great depression seized her—accompanied by a desire to be alone. Night and day now, for weeks, her vigilant care never relaxing, she had stayed by her husband's side. Surely it would not be wrong to leave him for a few hours in order to gain strength and refreshment. "My Savior went away sometimes," she thought.

One morning after many an injunction to stay indoors out of the damp and chilly atmosphere, and after arranging him on a lounge before a crackling, cheerful fire, and indicating articles in English and

French papers that he would find enjoyable, with kisses and pets, all of which he accepted with a gentle smile and an eloquent "thank you, thank you, dear; don't disturb yourself further about me, I shall be all right," she went out.

Many have spoken of the solitude possible in a great city, but more have felt it. The innumerable raying out in every direction; the endless crowds, each person appearing animated by some intense purpose hurrying him onward; the blank, staring houses; the shop fronts, plethoric with color; the throng of vehicles threading in and out of the maze of life and movement; the sunlight overhead, like a pitiless inquisitive eye,—everybody but one's self apparently at home.

When Madeline stepped on the pavement, and paused irresolutely a moment, she saw a lady approaching her who had been a guest at that fatal garden party. Although she had been steeling herself for years against such encounters, still, some element in her present mental condition, or a sense of the great distance in time and space separating her from those days, or a sudden, instinctive, unreasoning desire for just a word, a smile from somebody she had once known, made her linger and look.

The lady came nearer, bearing down upon her like a ship at sea, stately, elegant, her quick eye taking in all objects right and left. Madeline saw herself

included, recognized, and discarded, and all so quickly that she had turned to walk down the street almost immediately to hide her discomfiture.

She entered the Avenue de l'Opera before she became fully aware where she was. For the first time in years her pale cheeks burned with wounded pride, her lonely heart throbbed until she was compelled to stop in front of a flower-store to catch her breath. She had flattered herself, over and over, when dreading such possible encounters for her husband, that she herself had nothing to fear. She had suffered so many defeats, and had gone through so much self-examination, and had learned to love and reverence so much that was extraneous to self-interest, that she believed that small personal affronts would forever assume an impersonal quality.

Was she to be fettered forever in spirit to this plane of belittling conventionalities? Was her measure of herself to be ever so remotely connected with another person's measure?

She came back into the Rue de Rivoli. The trees in the Garden of the Tuilleries, their long arms still clinging to a few yellow leaves, invited her inside. She liked the long, shady avenue of clipped trees on the terrace. Children with their nurses were walking hither and thither; their prim step, the old expression that comes so early to the French child, made her pity them their short youth. And God pitied the

fleet blossoming of her joyous womanhood; yes, she knew He did. She knew that somewhere among the heavenly mysteries lay a loving solution to this riddle of her long discipline. She looked up into the blue sky softened with fleecy white clouds and prayed, "My dear Lord, lift me out of this valley."

When she came to the fountains and flower-beds, and saw the still unfinished palace, her thought reverted to the horror of the commune, and she prayed again, "Thy kingdom come." Prayer had become the habit of her mind.

She paused before one of the sphinxes sitting in symbolic guard over the wing of the Louvre overlooking the Seine and the Gardens. Its cold, judicial face and alert eyes looking askance and seeming all embracing, were indicative enough of power. When would the power of nations and rulers and of every human being become spiritualized? When would good deeds and right thoughts and pure aspirations measure all power that men would glorify?

She went down the Quai du Louvre, and, entering the square on which the Gallery du Louvre faced, passed into the Pavillon Denon, walked through the long hall of sculptures, slowly ascended the great staircase, entered the Salle Duchatel, and there stopped before a picture by Ingres of a winged and clawed being with an exquisite woman's face, but with something of the tigress in it. In the foreground

was a young man fascinated by the treacherous beauty. Underneath the winged creature, whose claw was slightly uplifted, and half concealed in gloom, was a cave from which human skulls and bones protruded. Hurrying out of the cavern was a monk, his head turned back in warning to the youth, the blue sky and landscape without in peaceful contrast with the uncanny beauty and horror within.

Madeline looked and lingered. Her husband's temptation and defeat were before her, symbolized. That horrible vault filled with bones seemed like the catacomb of all possible crimes.

She passed on, tears blinding her eyes. She opened the door of the Salon Carré and glided in. She knew what she wanted there—one face, one inspiration, before she returned to her duty, never again to leave it, she said to herself, while it remained. For what had she gained thus far in her solitude but heartaches?

She sat down on one of the velvet divans under the immense picture of the Feast of Cana, by Veronese, and slowly, solemnly, as if in very communion with the suffering and release embodied there, lifted her eyes to Murillo's incomparable Assumption.

That was no youthful Madonna. There was no common sorrow. There was a mature woman in whom tremendous grief and resignation had so wrought that, with Heaven open, its clouds uplift-

ing her, the vision of God before her amazed, transported gaze, the weariness of a whole life-time still showed in her frail countenance. Madeline beheld the attitude of feeble, humble, tremulous hope and supreme adoration in the sorrow-stricken, delicate face. Yes, even the mother of incarnate God had been afflicted in direct proportion to the magnitude of her blessedness.

What peculiar fiery trial had Murillo undergone, she wondered, to be able to portray such a face? She sat there a long time, her hands clasped in her lap, her wistful, mournful eyes trying to pierce the heart-depths on that immortal canvas.

The curious mixed life and movement went on around her unheeded. Parties with guides entered, gave a lingering, cold, unmoved look at the artistic genius of centuries, dawdled on toward the next gallery with the insatiable and satiated appetite of the wanderer traveling for cultivation, and failed to catch a breath of meaning from the intellectual conceptions that would still be hanging there for the chosen few, when their dollars had been passed over to other money-getters as stupid, and they themselves laid forgotten under memorial marbles. Artists of both sexes and all ages sat around on high stools, all with the professional negligé arrangement of hair. Blonde misses in serene, ambitious cheerfulness, posed, palette in one hand, and measuring-rod in the

other, before master-pieces of embodied passion, and, in copying outline, failed to see that neither Raphael nor Titian nor Veronese gave their youth the secret behind repose and color and composition. Here and there was a genuine worshiper of true art.

Madeline had entered the gallery with as reverent a spirit as she would have done some stately temple. Her communion ended, she rose irresolutely yet calm once more. As she turned away with one last, lingering look, she slowly lifted her eyes in passing toward the door, and, for a second, halted, so intense was the inquiring, unconscious gaze which arrested her attention.

A man of middle age stood leaning against the west wall where he had paused to survey the master-pieces of that rare collection, nearly all of which were visible from his point of view. Madeline's rapt, abandoned study of the Murillo had diverted his attention. Presently he found her deeply interesting and soon became as much engaged in a constructive process of thought as she. Nowhere, during years of travel, had he seen such a woman. The ubiquitous American had met him everywhere, yet here was a country-woman with something as new about her, even in that frequented spot, as if he had met her unconventionally and alone in her own drawing-room. That she was a woman of drawing-rooms, he was sure. That she

felt herself to be absolutely alone, and wished to be alone, he was also sure. But, so great was his interest, that, as she passed out through the crimson fan doors, nothing but the vulgarity of the thing detained him from following her.

"Frozen fire," was his comment as he sauntered from one painting to another, studying them conscientiously, but seeing only the woman who had awakened his curiosity. He made the round of the gallery. If he had been asked how long it had taken, he would have said a half hour. He had spent, in reality, but fifteen minutes. And now, his honor telling him that she must have passed out of sight long ago, as she had of course taken a *voiture*, he also left the gallery, but, with artless inconsistency, lost no time in doing so. Temptation had overcome him, although he refused to acknowledge it. He came out on the great square on which the Pavillon Denon opens. He looked toward the various archways conducting to an inner court and to the Rue de Rivoli. Far across the sunny space, just under the shadow of one of the arches, he thought he saw a gray skirt fluttering in the wind, and the long, swaying, gliding outline so characteristic of Madeline. Not one woman in a thousand walked like that. He sprang into a cab.

CHAPTER X.

THE TABLES ARE TURNED.

When Mark Dascom reached the Rue de Rivoli, there was not a trace of the mysterious woman. He got out, sauntering on aimlessly toward the great hotel center. Coming out on the Place Vendôme, he saw a small crowd gathering around its huge column. Elbowing his way through, Dascom found that the disturbance was caused by an American whom a guard was questioning about his hotel.

Dascom looked with a curious, dawning recognition at the extremely slight yet shrivelled figure standing there, his fastidiously gloved hand pressed against his cheek, his puzzled, troubled eyes seeking in vain in the mazes of his benumbed memory for the locality that evaded him.

Suddenly his brow cleared. Dropping his hand in relief, he exclaimed, "I have it! I have it! I am stopping at Hotel Beaujon."

"Why, my good man, that went to pieces twenty years ago!"

Then the volatile crowd sent up a laugh.

"See here, gend'arme," said Mark, advancing. "I know this gentleman. If you will allow me, I'll find his friends."

The policeman hailed a cab, placed the bewildered and unresisting man inside, and then stepped aside for Mark to enter, who gave the driver orders to go to the Champs Elysées. "I will drive around a while till he gets over his fright," he said to the policeman, in explanation.

They came out in a few minutes on the immense square of the Place de la Concorde. The magnificent fountains were playing in the sunlight. The obelisk was like a needle dividing the space between the Madeline and the Chamber of Deputies. Before them stretched the vast promenade of the Champs Elysées, the triumphal arch of Napoleon rising like a great gate to bar the gradual ascent of the stately avenue. On either hand, as they bowled over the smooth pavement, were rows of fine shade trees, under which sat throngs of pleasure seekers. Fountains shone through the trees, strains of music came from open-air bands, an endless melée of carriages rolled in every direction. Paris was its gayest. In the midst of this turn in his affairs, Mark momentarily forgot the lady who had so aroused his interest in the Salon Carré.

Meanwhile, let us retrace our steps a little.

When Henry Winchester found himself from under supervision for the first time in years, a curious but natural mental process set in. While with Madeline, his affection, and the dependence growing out of failing powers, rendered him very amenable to direction. Her oversight was so delicate and so unobtrusively withdrawn the instant it chafed, that, although there had been warning signals hung out, so to speak, no open friction had occurred. Three ideas were, however, gradually and secretly gaining possession of his befogged brain.

The greed of gain, which had led him to commit a crime, was now converted into a gradually increasing watchfulness of Madeline, lest she should spend too much money. The idiosyncracy had grown so imperceptibly and had reacted so subtly on her, that she was unconscious of how often she ordered a delicacy for his palate and went without herself. She had grown so used to repression, that hesitation over the loss of some creature comfort would have made her smile. Not so with Henry. If a thing were bought for him and for him alone, the whole complexion of the case was altered. He was ill. Like many another invalid who is, however, perfectly sane, his selfishness grew in exact proportion to the care lavished upon him. At periods when his memory lapsed more than usual, he was incapable of retaining any combination of figures. The bills which he

insisted on overlooking were invariably fabulous and wrong; but he would finally submit them to his wife to settle, with reiterated cautions not to allow herself to be cheated.

Lurking in the dim back-ground of his belief, was also the idea that he had not only forged, but that he had forcibly stolen. Then came the notion that he had murdered the man from whom he had stolen, all of which, however, no one knew. These horrible facts must be kept from Madeline, so great was his constant, secret fear that she would desert him. Saddest of all, he was less and less conscious of affection, but more and more desirous of her care. A growing anger, moreover, but carefully veiled, possessed him because of her surveillance.

Madeline's large, womanly nature enfolded this growing weakness and imbecility with charity. His reticence was gentleness to her. His unquestioning, almost child-like acceptance of all she lavished upon him, trust. His pitiful economizings were but the reaction from heavy loss, which could not mean any personal slight to her, or callous indifference to her comfort.

She had been gone but a few minutes, when an insatiable desire seized him to see Paris for himself. The places visited in his youth rose vividly before him. He donned his coat and gloves with trembling alacrity.

When Madeline reached the hotel, she hastened to their rooms, a gentle apology for having been gone so long ready to fall from her lips. To her surprise, she found them locked. She put her lips to the key-hole and cried softly, "Henry, Henry!" No answer. Was he asleep? Had he gone out alone? She rattled the brass door-handle. She put her ear to the key-hole. Not a sound. A maid passed through the corridor.

"If you please!" called Madeline, arresting her attention, "go to the concierge for me and ask if the key of 65 is in the office."

"*Oui, Madame,*" and the maid hastened away to return presently with the key.

Madeline admitted herself and then looked around the vacant rooms. The books and papers lay where she had left them. "He must have gone soon after I did," she thought. A dull, responsible fear seized her. What if harm should come to him.

There was nothing to do but wait. Pretty soon she requested of the concierge when Mr. Winchester went out. "Did he leave word when he would be back?"

The concierge shook his head negatively.

Meanwhile Mark Dascom had an immense curiosity about his companion. He had known Henry Winchester seven years before as one of the most conspicuous figures on Wall street. Not having the

slightest personal acquaintance with him, Mark found no present clue for introducing himself. His companion seemed so perfectly acquiescent in his society, that he thought it wise, on the whole, to let well enough alone for the present. When they reached the summit of the ascent of the Champs Elysées, and were passing around the grand arch, Henry broke the silence.

"Greatest broker in human life the world ever saw. If he hadn't been so scientific in his operations, Napoleon would have been called a murderer. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You understand brokers, I see," said Mark.

"O, within safe limits. Of course, of course! All men are brokers. What kind of stock do you speculate in?" And he turned sharply toward Mark.

"I am one of the few who haven't learned to speculate."

"Well, let me explain it to you. It's the only way to make money now-a-days. It's a kind of universal, legalized robbery, legalized after the English method—by precedent. There are political brokers, and grain brokers, and social brokers. Now my wife is socially short, just now, all because I went in for longs at the wrong moment. Madeline has a lot of money, though. But I have to watch her. She's very extravagant. Ordered dinner last night for two, when there's plenty if you order for one. She loses

her appetite when I make her economize in that way. I always have enough! You see, when you have once suffered a loss," and Henry took hold of Mark's coat and pressed his long, thin face forward, "it makes a man careful. Women can't understand the risks. We walk everywhere, Madeline and I, when we are out together. It does me good and gives her the fresh air. She has a great fancy for driving, though, in Paris."

"I would like to meet your wife," said Mark.

Henry looked at him suspiciously. Presently he said, with a shrewd gleam in his eyes, "You would not enjoy my wife. She is one of these home bodies who have little to say and who think little. 'The common round, the daily task!'—that sort of woman."

"Is she so very plain, then?"

Henry contracted his lids and looked knowingly through two long, narrow slits at Mark. "Suppose we drop the conversation about my wife. Where are you taking me?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know! Then drive to the Hotel Beaujon."

"There is no such hotel, my good man."

"Don't talk nonsense. Why, it's the best known hotel in Paris. I'm hungry."

"We'll go to the cafe in the Bois. We can get something good there."

"Order for one! Order for one!" cried Henry facetiously.

"Do you wish me to order?"

"You might as well," said Henry, carelessly. Then taking out a purse which Madeline took care should always be well supplied, he counted his money over.

"You horrid, physical wreck," thought Mark, eyeing his companion sidewise. "Whatever Madeline may be, she is a saint to take care of you."

The long afternoon shadows had begun to slant under the thickly planted trees of the Bois de Boulogne, when they turned back to the city, Mark as nonplussed as ever about his companion's hotel. There was nothing to be done but to stop at random at some of the most prominent ones.

The throngs in the Champs Elysées were greater on their return. The carriages in the Place de la Concorde were more numerous as they made their exit in front of the palace of the Minister of Marine, whence they drove down the long, straight, beautiful Rue de Rivoli. To the right were the historic gardens, to the left the long, monotonous lime-stone buildings with their interminable arcades and gambrel roofs looking as though they could accommodate a whole city full themselves. They kept on the Tuilleries side of the street. As they approached the Hotel Meurice, Mark casually looked along the

windows above the entre-sol. There, as if in a frame, was the lady whom he had seen in the Salon Carré.

His usually cool blood tingled. He bade the driver stop, and, getting out, conducted Henry into the hotel.

"Ah, Mr. Winchester, glad to see you!" said the clerk, advancing with that domestic interest in details common to foreign hotel officials. "Mrs. Winchester has been here several hours."

Mark and the clerk exchanged glances.

"I thought you would find the Beaujon," said Henry, turning to him triumphantly. Then, with a sudden access of dignity, now that he felt at home, a vague marshaling of courtesy and breeding, he held out his hand, expressed much obligation for the pleasant day he had enjoyed and withdrew.

Mark lingered in the office. He glanced over the register for three months back. He could get no probable or possible clue to the lady whom he had seen, in the wilderness of names from all parts of the United States. He did not care to make inquiries. When he closed the book, the clerk said, "Is n't there something the matter with that gentleman here?" He laid his hand on his forehead.

"A great deal, a great deal," said Mark emphatically. "He needs a man to care for him."

"He has only his wife with him. He will kill her if he doesn't kill himself or die soon. As sly as a fox, and as malicious. She knows it least of anybody, or appears to do so. He would have been turned out of the hotel a dozen times if it hadn't been for her."

"What does he do?"

"She pays the bills; why, I don't know, unless it is because he isn't sound. But we get a letter from him almost every day accusing us of theft and asking us to make all kinds of impossible deductions."

"Have they any friends in the hotel?"

The clerk shook his head mysteriously.

"I know all about him, but I have never met Mrs. Winchester."

"I wish you would ask to see her, and, if you can, give her a bit of advice."

"I can do that, I suppose. I'll come around this evening," said Mark, after a moment's reflection.

When Henry Winchester got out of the lift, he looked around with such confused uncertainty, that the man said, "I'll show you the way, sir."

On reaching his parlor door, he waved his guide imperiously away. The idea, or rather an idea of Madeline had never been clearer in his mind than at this moment. It was high time to stop the conspiracy, of which she was doubtless the center, against his rights and his manliness. More and more, the crime which he had committed was shifted

in his suspicions to those around him, and in its wake trooped companion sins, united or separated, according to the vagaries of a diseased brain.

When he opened the door, only a spark was needed to kindle the flame.

Madeline provided that spark, without uttering a word. She turned from the window where she was still lingering, but with a look of such anxious solicitude and inquiry, that his dignity, on the alert, vouchsafed no explanation. He strode past her, his head uplifted, ignoring her completely.

"Where have you been, Henry?"

"Where did you go, Madeline?"

"To the Louvre, to see the paintings."

He removed his coat and gloves with nonchalant deliberation, strutted past her to the sitting-room, drew an arm-chair before the fire, and, taking a paper, began to read.

She sat down beside him, her hand on his arm. "Dear, where have you been?"

"Why do you want to know?" he at length condescended to reply, an angry, suspicious light in his eyes.

"No matter, if you do not wish to tell."

"Then why have you asked, and asked, and asked, if it is no matter? You must stop this interference. Are you jealous? I can't stop to explain every detail of my business and whereabouts to you. I have im-

portant business, just now. If you read the papers more, you would know that a great theft has been committed about which the Bourse is in arms. They suspect an American. Don't—don't you tell," and he held up his finger warningly, as his fancy began to evolve the story. "I believe I am on track of the man; looks as honest as the day! But I always suspect these open-faced men. I never told you, Madeline, that I was once superintendent of prisons for six years. That gave me a wonderful insight into criminal physiognomy. Now this man has frank blue eyes, a generous smile, expansive chest. You would n't think he had a secret or could have one to look at him. Those are the men to suspect. No, don't question me. You must try to get used to being alone, after this," and he laid his hand with a grand assumption of paternal authority on hers. "I shall be away a great deal while we are in Paris."

She rose and went into the adjoining room. They must go away again, that was certain. The noise and excitement of the city were too stimulating.

She had dreaded his lapses of memory concerning the past, but now, to have that past return converted into active suspicions of herself and others, was intolerable and dangerous.

She had called in no physician as yet, for she had believed that there would simply be a gradual and

final loss of mind, but his strength had been so much greater the past few days, that, in the event of physical health and mental aberration, only one thing remained to be done.

She sat down and wrote a description of her husband's case to an eminent specialist, and, sending the note, ordered dinner, which passed in the usual quiet way.

The dinner had been removed. Numerous candles were burning on the mantel and the round table drawn near the fire. The lights were repeated in the mirrors that paneled the doors and filled every available large space on the wall.

Henry Winchester, in slippers and maroon dressing-gown, reclining in a large arm-chair drawn between the fire and the table, looked frail but not especially ill in the midst of the warm color and light. The London Times and the Standard lay on the table. Preparatory to reading the Nineteenth Century, he was leisurely cutting the leaves. Everything American in their reading had been dropped by mutual consent.

Madeline walked slowly up and down, an abstracted air under the smile she had learned to wear. She lent a richness and dignity to the room. The faint rustle of her black silk emphasized her carriage. The full lace at her throat and wrists softened the exceedingly delicate contour of her face and hands.

Her eyes had an expression as if they had absorbed much light and were giving it gently forth. She at least had the pleasure of the stoic. There is nothing illogical, scientifically considered, when a woman of thirty-five transfers her hopes to an inevitable condition certain to be hers at the end of another thirty-five or forty years. To the nature essentially hopeful, any period seems comparatively short, provided it either promises, or appears to promise, a definite fulfillment. Madeline, in her walk, was bridging over the rest of her life with an intention of patient waiting. She saw only the shore on either side of the gulf; the depth and volume and temper of the stream between she believed she could brave; that was all. That it was a pleasant stream, promising other than spiritual healing and refreshment, she had long ago ceased to think.

Her reveries were disturbed by a knock.

Henry promptly cried, "*entrez.*"

A servant appeared with a visiting card.

"Bring the gentleman up," said Mr. Winchester, before Madeline could shake off her preoccupation.

"Who is it, dear?"

He shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands, and by his gestures disclaimed all knowledge.

In another moment, Mr. Dascom entered, in evening dress. His broad, erect form, and a certain openness of expression, made Madeline at once recognize

the gentleman her husband had described. She also remembered that it was he whose gaze had arrested her attention in the Salon Carré.

The caller approached Henry with an energy and directness of address which received a check when the latter, bowing slightly but inquiringly, placed a chair for him, giving no indication, by an introduction, of his wife's presence.

Dascom began to feel in a foolish dilemma. Why should he trouble himself about this man, simply because Winchester was an American? He bent over for a second to warm his hands, and in doing so, glanced at Madeline for the first time. A perceptible flush mantled his brow.

"I called, Mr. Winchester," said Mark, after a little preliminary conversation on the insularity of the English papers, "to inquire, as a fellow-countryman, whether you would not continue the acquaintance we began so pleasantly to-day, by driving with me to-morrow."

"I should be most happy to drive with you, my dear sir, but you must be laboring under a misapprehension. It was not I who made your acquaintance." Henry softly rubbed his hands together, laughing with a tantalizing facetiousness.

Mark looked over to Madeline for a second. What would she think of him? However, that made little matter. The sequence of events would vindicate him.

"Perhaps you do not recall me. I was only one of many who sought an introduction. Doubtless you did not notice me particularly. I hope I am not intruding, Mr. Winchester."

"On the contrary, Mr. Dascom."

"Let me see," said Mark, after a pause. "I suppose, now that I have stumbled here, that it would be the proper thing for me to present credentials. I happen to have a few in the way of letters." Putting his hand in his breast pocket, he again looked over to Madeline, as if appealing for pardon. "Ah, here is one from Mr. Lowell. I have been his guest in London. Here is also an invitation to dinner from the Turkish ambassador."

"Pray do not trouble yourself further," said Henry graciously. "My dear," to Madeline, who rose and came forward, "allow me to present Mr. Dascom to you. My wife, Mr. Dascom."

There was not a trace on Henry's face of any recollection of his conversation concerning Madeline.

For the first time in years, she felt an overpowering need of advice and assistance. Whoever this Mr. Dascom was, he inspired her trust, and, yielding to her intuitions, she extended her hand cordially. "We have had so few callers since we have been abroad that I hope you will give us the pleasure of spending an hour or two with us, if you have the time to do so."

"We have been very much limited to each other's society on account of Mrs. Winchester's health. However, I think she is strong enough now for a little more variety."

For a second, a look of amazement flashed across Madeline's face. Then, with a glance at Mark, in which the soul of a despairing woman was revealed, she said, "I am extremely anxious to go further South now. I need a milder climate."

"This is just the season for Nice," promptly replied Mark, divining her meaning. "If you have never been there, I can assure you beforehand that nothing is more charming than the way the bay curves in there to meet the esplanade. Palms and pepper-trees, flowers and cactuses make the place tropical. The mountains, rising steeply behind the town, are like a vast wall, shutting off the north wind. O, you would be delighted with Nice."

"Shall we go to Nice?" Madeline laid her hand on the back of her husband's chair.

"Certainly, if you wish. As I am a physician, Mr. Dascom, I have treated my wife myself. As a rule, diversion is a better tonic than any medicine. My wife was seriously threatened with nervous prostration before coming abroad; but perfect quiet and change of scene have worked wonders. She is very easily fatigued still. From being very robust, she has grown exceedingly slight." In his new char-

acter he took Madeline's thin hand with a curious blending of professional and conjugal solicitude.

Mark remained a half-hour, and then, rising, renewed his apologies for calling. While thus engaged, a servant again appeared, and this time with the card of Dr. Rudolph Amiens.

"Excuse me," said Mark, earnestly, as Henry read the name aloud; "if you expect Dr. Amiens, I will linger a moment longer. Dr. Amiens is one of my warmest friends."

"Ah, don't let us detain you, although I am extremely delighted to have met you. I esteem the hospitality of your call very highly. Don't wait. I hope we shall meet again on our return from the South. In fact," added Henry, rubbing his hands again, and marshalling Mark toward the door, "this is a professional visit on the part of Dr. Amiens. I believe his time is so very limited."

"Pray remain, Mr. Dascom, if it will make you feel more at ease," interrupted Madeline. "Surely, dear, Dr. Amiens can stay five minutes longer, more or less."

"Wife, you little appreciate the harassing claims on a physician's time and strength."

"At least we ought not to keep the gentleman waiting. Ask Dr. Amiens to come up, Annois."

"I promise you to leave as soon as Dr. Amiens has given me his verbal certificate of good character,"

said Mark, laughing. "Let me assure you, Mr. Winchester, that I fully appreciate your professional courtesy."

Henry bowed with the *empressement* of a Frenchman.

Dr. Amiens now entered.

"I am delighted to see you, Doctor. Dr. Amiens, Madeline. You see, Doctor, my wife feels that her case demands the attention of a specialist."

"Ah, Monsieur Dascom!" now said the little doctor in astonishment. "Do I see you once more? What a pleasure! I did not know you were in Paris."

"I arrived only yesterday."

"And I was not immediately informed?"

The nervous little Frenchman spread out his hands, closed his eyes, shrugged his shoulders, dropped his chin and expressed a cyclopedia full of regrets in a minute.

"Dr. Amiens, I have committed a social blunder which I will explain to you later. Kindly introduce me as fully as possible to Mr. and Mrs. Winchester."

"Introduce Monsieur Dascom?"—this with a look of arch raillery and flattering intonation that was irresistible. "Introduce the chief proprietor of that great journal, Le Soir? Introduce the most popular American in our professional Parisian circles?

Introduce the president of the Franco-American Caspian Sea Oil-Propelling Company? Really, my dear friend, this is absurd!"

"There, there!" said Mark, raising his hand in dismay. "I will call to-morrow, Doctor."

"No, no. Dine with me at the Bristol, at seven o'clock."

"Thanks. Very well. Good evening, Mr. Winchester." Mark extended his hand to Madeline.

"I shall be happy to have you call again, Mr. Dascom."

His blue eyes expanded an instant. A sense of chivalrous protection made him long to do something to help a lady so strangely placed. "I will," he said, in a low tone.

Dr. Amiens took Mark's vacant chair, pretending to shiver as he sat down.

"This is such execrable weather. All the foreigners have colds, and all the Parisians have the—the blues. Fog and chilliness and mud and a shower every ten minutes; that is what Paris is now. I wish I were one of the fortunate ones who can go South."

"What do you think of the winter climate of Nice?" asked Henry.

"None better," said the doctor, promptly. "It is equable, free from damp winds, and much dryer than that of ordinary sea-side sanitariums. I think highly of Nice, most assuredly."

"Our American medical journals speak favorably of it. I have never been there. My wife expresses a desire to go there. You don't think the climate too exhilarating for people suffering from nervous disorders? My wife is very delicate."

"Judging from her appearance, I think she might go to Nice. Have you ever had severe fever, Madame?"

"No."

"Any pulmonary trouble?"

"On the contrary. My lungs and throat are perfectly sound."

"You can take her to Nice." The physician bowed his head to Henry. "May I ask, sir, if you are a doctor also?"

"I am."

"Ah! Do you have a specialty also?"

"Skin diseases," promptly replied Henry. "If you will excuse me, Doctor, we will not talk on medicine more than is absolutely necessary, as my wife has never been able to overcome an aversion to the subject. And just now, with her nerves in their present state,—" his expression conveyed the need of great caution.

"Of course, of course!" said Dr. Amiens.

"Now, Madame, a few more questions, and I shall be through. Mr. Winchester, will you kindly give me a glass of wine first, though."

Henry rose to comply. There was a barely perceptible arrangement of his person, as he started to cross the room. While he walked quickly, he shuffled his feet, rather than raised them in the natural way. He brought the glass of wine, but, as he handed it to Dr. Amiens, his grasp suddenly relaxed, and the tumbler fell from his hand.

"I might have helped myself," and the doctor bustled to the carafe. Returning, he asked Madeline a half dozen general questions, and then, rising with precipitation, wrote a prescription, and, saying that he had stayed too long, and that he would call again in the morning, he left.

Henry conducted him to the door, waited till he had passed down the corridor, closed the door, locked it, and, walking back, confronted his wife, who rose instinctively to the encounter.

"What do you mean?" he said, extending his closed fist. "Are you so vain and weak that you will encourage a thief like that Mr. Dascom to call again? I heard you invite him. Why, he is liable to arrest at any moment. He is seeking some credulous American for swindling purposes. You will force me to leave Paris immediately, if you conduct yourself in this way. This Dr. Amiens! Did you send for him for me? Let me tell you that I am well,—and that I will not be dictated to,—and—and—"

A deeper and deeper flush rose to his face. As the words dropped stammeringly from his lips, he staggered, and then fell in a paralyzed, confused heap into an arm chair.

"Dearest, you are *not* well." Madeline knelt beside him.

"I am well. I nev—never was better. I'm co—ld, that—is—all."

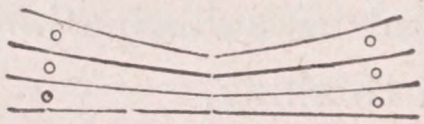
"So you are. I'll give you something to warm you." She administered a stimulant.

Presently his head, already drawn to one side began to drop more and more. He fell asleep. Still kneeling beside him, she chafed his hands, to which a feeble vitality slowly returned. He woke an hour later. She helped him to bed, where a lethargic slumber suspended his hallucinations and gave her a respite in which to think.

The next morning he was too feeble to rise, but his thoughts were less confused. He was perfectly amenable. While he was in this condition, Dr. Amiens called.

"There is nothing to be done, Madame," said the doctor, in conclusion. "Give him all the tonics he can take. He may never have another day like yesterday; still, he is liable to aberrations. If you are able to stand the strain, do not allow him out of your sight. He cannot live much longer. Either his physical or mental powers will suddenly collapse.

This physical improvement that you have noticed has been only temporary. In any event, I do not think he can outlive the winter. Take him away from Paris immediately. Nice is as good a place as any—perhaps the best.



CHAPTER XI.

NICE.

Two days later they went to Nice.

A gibbous moon hung like a deep golden bowl over the Tuilleries gardens as they left the hotel. To the east rose the rectangular pile of the palace. Over the smooth pavement coupés rolled almost noiselessly. Madeline was in the heart of the gayest city in the world. Was there a sadder woman in the world?

Before their departure Dr. Amiens had called once more.

After seeing his patient, and after a short consultation with Madeline, he still lingered, as if something were on his mind. He bade her good-evening, however, but, on reaching the door, turned, hat in hand, and, with spasmodic abruptness, said:

"Mees Winchester, I would like to say one word to you."

"Certainly, Dr. Amiens." She came slightly forward.

The doctor glanced at the tall, frail figure, the pale, calm face whose life seemed to center in the lambent glow of the hazel eyes.

"Mees Winchester, my freend, Mr. Dascom, have told me that he know all about your husband. He say that himself found him, in the Place Vendôme, seek, *distrait*, and that it was himself which drove with him, stay with him all day and bring him home. And he say that the clerk *la-bas*"—Dr. Amiens pointed through the floor—"ask him to come to see you, for you very much alone, and your husband do strange things, *secretement*—write wild letters to peoples, and dat you ought to have a freend in dese strange climes. He tink, Mr. Dascom, dat eef he call on your husband, he meet you, and your husband recognize him, and den he be in course to be of assistance. But you know how it is," and Dr. Amiens shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you mean to say, Dr. Amiens," said Madeline, growing a trifle paler, "that Mr. Dascom knew my husband in New York?"

"He know everyting." What would be the best English, thought the doctor; for in his anxiety he endeavored to have his say in imperfect English. "He know his fortune and his meesfortune. He say, Mees Winchester, dat eef, at any time, he can be of assistance, he be most happy. He expect to be in Nice later. *Permittez-moi* to say, Mees Winchester, dat I know

Mr. Dascom dis many year, and he be a gentleman, a man of de strictest honor. He will be a proper person, quite, for you to know."

"Thank you, Dr. Amiens," and she extended her hand. "Say to Mr. Dascom that I thank him, also, most warmly, for any attention he has shown to Mr. Winchester."

The doctor waited a second, but she had no additional message.

A couple of hours later they were seated in their compartment of a *wagon-lit*, gliding out of the vast arched station of the Lyons and Marseilles railroad.

Now that they had started, Madeline connected this night with that other, when they traveled from Dover to Paris. Then the present need was seen as through a glass, darkly. Now, although it was very real and terrible, she felt stronger to meet it, as being inevitable. Psychologically, as well as religiously, there is truth in the scripture, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

The night wore away in fitful slumber and dreams strange as retrospective life. The morning dawned, balmy and clear.

When Madeline had arranged the invalid, it was ten o'clock. They had left Marseilles. They had begun to catch glimpses of the Mediterranean.

All at once, from a long, rolling stretch of country, slightly wooded, and exhibiting the high cultivation of Southern France, they passed to the verge of cliffs, against which the surf and sea-weed beat in a mad frolic of movement. Above the blue water was the blue sky. Far out reached the rich purple and red streaks which make the Mediterranean so beautiful along its shores. Dotting the valleys which intervened, when they went further inland, were infinitesimal homes, with their outhouses and miniature courts, suggesting "a nature tamed and grown domestic, like a barn-door fowl."

By-and-by, they came into the olive groves. Under their gray shadows were bundles of fagots neatly piled for winter use. Foot-paths traversed them in every direction, converging, separating, and disappearing. There were traces everywhere of a dense population and the most careful cultivation.

If it had not been for the frequent wide outlooks over the sea, and the corresponding depths of the sky, Madeline would have had a restricted feeling. A vague longing stirred her for the measureless forests of her native land, for the sight of a road unfenced, miles of country still unused, a luxuriant tangle of underbrush, and flowers clustering around the feet of primeval oaks and chestnuts. Nature here was like a highly-developed society, as if it had been forced and pruned until all distinguishing features of climate or

distance were lost. She thanked God for the unreclaimed sea, the inaccessible and unmelted snows of lofty mountains, and those barren wastes of moss and rock, the perpetual possession of goats and birds and insects. Do not spiritual helps come to us in the breath of the unchained winds, unknown woodland odors, and the one wild, sustained note of some bird crossing our vision for a second and then disappearing into the unseen, like some pure soul that yesterday was with us and to-day is not? When we are attuned to all these minor and humbler melodies we are conscious of kinship not measured by the relations of time. Madeline had something of this exalted feeling as they traveled on, notwithstanding the high cultivation everywhere visible. The flowers in the gardens of the watering places through which they glided, each orange tree, yellow now with its golden fruit, the fig trees spreading out their many-fingered leaves to the soft air, said something about a beneficent, watchful power, as pervasive as the atmosphere, as helpful as the gentle rains.

At last! The journey was at an end. Tired and rested both, they left the train.

They drove toward the sea along a wide, shady street bordered with eucalyptus trees. They crossed the stony bed of the Paillon, its shallow, muddy flow giving no hint of the swollen current that sometimes dashed through its walled bed. They passed bright

stores, the windows gaily decked with the mosaics and corals of the South. Then they came out on the Boulevard des Anglais by the public garden, in whose shady depths a band was playing. On either hand rose tall date-palms; cactuses bordered the walks. The gardens were full of pepper trees and other tropical growths. Before them was the Bay des Anges, sheltered on the west by the promontory of Antibes and the Iles de Lerins, on the east by Castle Hill, whose bold, white-faced bluff towered a harmonious part of the limestone houses of the town below.

They found a hotel built in the Italian style, its bright pink walls and green blinds in vivid contrast with the intense blue of the Mediterranean washing up a few rods distant on the sandy, shelving beach bordering an extensive promenade.

Their rooms opened by long windows on a marble terrace, sufficiently high to lift them above the passers-by. Cactuses and ferns and roses in urns were placed at intervals along the wide coping of the baluster. An awning covered its intire width, so that they could have both out-door life and privacy.

Henry went out on the terrace and gazed silently over the scene for a few minutes. Far away on the outermost Ile de Lerins, the light-house was already shining. Over the sea, against the horizon, the palest pink clouds stretched in almost transparent bands.

The water was as blue and as calm as a lake in midsummer. The soft, damp air was heavy with the perfume of roses and violets. A few stars glimmered faintly.

Madeline watched him from the shadow of their parlor and uttered a faint sigh of relief as she saw the influence of the beautiful picture soothing away the sharpness and irritability which were becoming his habitual expression. She moved about, softly, arranging the sofa and the easy chairs where they commanded the view and air. "O, if they only could stay —till the end."

It rained the next day. A steady downpour beat the sanded walks into a hard yellow floor. It gave new vividness to the flowers. The soft gray pall over the sky, the calm and leaden sea, the damp and sleepy air, the perfume from myriad flowers, the motionless, rough-barked palms, the thick leaves of the cactuses, the neutral whiteness of the houses, the stillness, and the repose which comes from new and agreeable surroundings, all conduced to the peace which appeared to have settled upon Henry.

He lay, half reclining on a sofa, books piled around him, for, no matter what his condition, he had thus far exhibited a mania for all kinds of literature. He had read very little, however, this first day in Nice. His gaze was fixed most of the time on the smooth water, where it lost itself in the curtain of rain.

Madeline was busy sewing a lace border on some handkerchiefs. She sewed a great deal when sitting thus beside her husband. Her thoughts were so much more desultory, and tired her less; besides, she could watch him without appearing to do so. She had abandoned asking him about his readings, for, though he were occupied in this way all day, he was never able to give her a connected account of what interested him. It was harrowing to watch this slow wreck of a once versatile mind. Many a night she prayed for his release. And yet, the more his faculties became impaired, the more he clung with terrible tenacity to life.

The day had nearly passed, and still she sewed, and he read or thought.

Late in the afternoon the clouds broke, changing to great purple scrolls that settled down in the north and west, throwing the promontory and islands into strong relief. A little later the edges of the clouds flamed with crimson, and a deep blueness pervaded the lofty depths of the sky and the now far-reaching sea. A wind sprang up, cresting the waves with flakes of foam.

She laid aside her sewing and knelt beside his couch.

He put out his hand; she took it between her own.

"It is wonderfully beautiful, is it not?"

He nodded solemnly.

After a little he turned to his wife. "Madeline, do you love me?"

"I do, Henry," she said softly and earnestly.

"Dearest, your love has been like the grace of God to me. You are astonished? I know what is the matter with me, Madeline. Just now, while my mind is clear, and my memory goes back over—over all the years that you have stood by my side, for better, for worse, I want to talk with you. I have been able to think clearly this entire afternoon. While I can, my darling, let me tell you that if you had forsaken me, I could never have softened to the belief that God is love. Now I know it. Over and over I said to myself, during those six years in prison, if a mere woman can be so strong and so earnest and so holy, what must God be? O, my wife, it is through you, and you alone, that I dared reach up to Him far enough to pray. It may seem a little thing to save one soul, a soul that took all the joy out of your life, but, dear, you did a Christ-like deed, and I link your devotion to my need with that last prayer of our Lord, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

"Do not tax yourself further, dear. What you have said is an unspeakable consolation. And—you are not afraid to die, are you, Henry?"

He cast a look of melancholy sympathy at her before replying. "Not when my mind is clear. How

gladly would I go now—from this couch—with my hand in yours—but, Madeline, when that cloudiness settles upon my faculties, I am filled with passions and fancies that aggravate my condition terribly. Then the very thought of death is inconceivably horrible. O, my wife, pray, pray that I may go out of this life during one of these brief intervals of reason. Pray that I may go soon."

"Yes, Henry." She placed her soft hand upon her eyes. "Try to go to sleep now. Don't use all the strength you have. Shall I sing?"

"Yes; sing 'Jesus, Lover of my Soul.'"

The wind had died away. The purple clouds had sunk below the horizon. The white caps still danced over the wide bay. Sprinkling the vault of the sky were innumerable stars. On the promenade resounded the patter of feet and the hum of voices. All Nice had thronged out of doors to enjoy the sunset and the clear evening. Beside her husband's couch, her gentle hand stroking his thin locks, sat Madeline, her tremulous voice bearing on the still air the words of that immortal hymn.

As the melody floated upward, the blinds of a window just over their awning were thrown open. A man leaned against the sash, his ear bent to catch every word. As the words of the last stanza, full and clear, and as if charged with a triumphiant trust, rang out,

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin."

he dashed the tears from his eyes and moved away.

The man was Mark Dascom.

He had reached Nice that afternoon, and driving straight to the Hotel des Anglais, as he had been there repeatedly, he took a room before it occurred to him to look at the register.

When he found that the Winchesters had selected this hotel out of the many in the watering-place, he thought it a providence. Something about this lonely woman interested him profoundly. He was a man of deeds rather than theories, and, as his deeds had always been straightforward and honest, it did not occur to him to analyze his feelings. All he knew was that here was a beautiful woman with a face no less indicative of purity and suffering and sweetness than that of the Madonna at whom she had gazed with such imploring pathos, and that he meant to help her if he could.

Day succeeded day. The willful impulses and incipient violence that had marked the latter part of their stay in Paris, passed entirely away. But the quiet period of reasonable conversation that the husband and wife had had together during that sunset hour, was like the fading light of an Arctic day. An apathetic dullness and melancholy succeeded, which continued with little intermission.

Every morning Madeline walked with him on the esplanade. He attracted little attention among so many invalids. Strange contrasts, these, one sees in the haunts of fashion. At certain hours, they seemed like the out-door hospitals of the rich.

But Henry's step grew slower and more faltering, his feet seemed weighted with lead. Saddest of all, his expression became more and more vacant and senile.

December came. The flowers bloomed more profusely, the sky became bluer, the life grew gayer, as the crowds of pleasure-seekers and invalids increased.

It was during one of these brilliant mornings that she met Mark for the first time in Nice. He asked permission to join her.

They walked slowly on, stopping occasionally to rest on one of the many benches placed under the shade trees.

It was while they were sitting down, Madeline between her husband and Mark, that the latter asked her if she proposed remaining in Nice all winter.

"I have no plans," she answered, a little sadly. "So long as Mr. Winchester finds Nice beneficial, we shall stay. Are you here, also, for your health, Mr. Dascom?"

He smiled, greatly amused, and involuntarily straightened his shoulders. There was a laughing

sparkle in his clear, full blue eye, such an apparent perfection of health in his sanguine complexion, and such robust strength in his voice as he said emphatically, "I am not here for my health," that she was surprised into a laugh.

Mark looked at her in amazement, to find that she had a laugh so near the surface. His conception of her somewhat changed. He had not analyzed her so far as to think she could not laugh, but, if the truth be told, he had placed her in his conception where she had placed Murillo's Madonna in hers. He did not esteem her less; he felt more at home with her.

"It would be hard to tell you precisely why I am in Nice," he added, still looking at her studiously.

He had thought all women pitched to a one-chorded melody. They were gay, or they were not gay. They were frivolous, or they were serious. That they were like David's harp of many strings was an impossible contradiction to his experience, which, however, was as limited as it is possible for that of a man of forty to be. He knew men. Until a year ago he had never had time to seek or enjoy the society of women, and, now that he did have time, he made very slow progress, and differentiated them very much as a boy does. Those he liked, he liked. Those he disliked, he hated and let alone. The result was that he was acquainted with very few, and approached them with a certain virile naïveté.

It is only male authors who analyze women effeminately, who ascribe a hundred shades of premeditation to the most trivial act, who outrival Milton's Satan in their conception of a thoroughly wicked woman, or invest with lymphatic life one of Madame Tussaud's wax images when they wish to create an amiable woman. Their logic runs thus:

All women are either all amiable or all bad.

Ethel Harkness is not an all bad woman.

Ethel Harkness is therefore an all amiable woman.

Final deduction: Ethel is a nonentity.

A man out of a book thinks of a woman, believes in a woman, according to the way she looks or the way she acts, or both. From Virgil down, "she walks a goddess," is the first, grand, general proposition under which everything else is included.

"You have not told me what you find to interest you in Nice," said Madeline, feeling no curiosity, but wishing to break the silence, as Mark ceased studying her to gaze at the sea. He might have been Neptune himself, he looked so calm and so unconsciously majestic.

"I will try to tell you. I have business in Paris and Russia, which will keep me on this side the Atlantic for a year or more. It does not occupy me constantly, and in my intervals of leisure I amuse myself by seeing the world—the world that congregates in such places as this. I am trying to understand it and

enjoy it. I have been told repeatedly that it is the proper thing to do. I haven't succeeded very well yet," said Mark nonchalantly.

"It would be a very serious thing to fail," said Madeline.

They looked full into each other's eyes, and Mark laughed a hearty, irresistible peal.

"It is something that most men and women learn easily, and then spend a lifetime in forgetting," continued Madeline.

"That sounds bitter."

"The bitterness has all gone out of it for me, but the philosophy remains. Let me assure you," she added, rising, "that you must have a native inaptitude, or you would have learned the lesson long ago. Good-morning." Although she smiled very kindly, he knew that his further escort was not desired.

He passed out of her mind with the occasion. There was a healthy unconsciousness about him, a large boyishness without, however, any lack of dignity, a kind of unruffled calmness which was by no means stagnation, that she enjoyed and respected. She felt these qualities more, in this random talk by the sea than she had in Paris, when a new anxiety was pressing on her. So true it is that, no matter how heavy the burden, the moment of tremendous pressure is when it is first fitted to the back. It is when a heavy sea first strikes a vessel, that it creaks

and quivers from stem to stern. When it sinks, it goes down with little sound, and no apparent resistance.

Madeline walked with Henry until the sun drove them indoors. Then she wrote a long letter to Rebecca. She had made this link with the past of her own accord, and, after it was done, took great comfort in the correspondence.

The next day was the twenty-fourth. In the hotel, every one had a consciousness of Christmas. The hilarity of the children was contagious. The sun shone in golden, Southern splendor. The tall palms spread out their tops like hands inviting a blessing. The very air, laden with perfume, gave a new conception to our Northern born Madeline of sweetness and grace and good news in the words, "Unto you a child is born. Unto you a son is given." What could she do to make the season suggestive to Henry? They had not driven of late. The doctor had advised walking. But Henry seemed so strong this sweet, clear day, that surely nothing could be better than a drive on the Corniche road.

At four o'clock, a little before the stream of equestrians and carriages was at its height, they started, a dull eagerness in Henry's eyes, a solicitude and tenderness in Madeline's face and manner, manifesting itself in a last tucking of the robe, an adjustment of neck handkerchief and coat that absorbed her as

completely as though they were in a wilderness. There was something startling in the conjunction of so much vital beauty with such decrepitude.

Mark saw them start. A few minutes later he, too, was on the road. It did not occur to him that he was in a Parsifal mood, or as much of a knight-errant as Orlando Furioso, and with this difference, that the possibility of romance in the relation he was weaving toward Madeline did not even shadow his consciousness. Strong business claims and years of business honor sometimes indicate conserving moral qualities, as salt does the purity of the sea. Just as great depths occasionally underlie the business man's exterior as overlie the salt beds in mid-ocean.

They drove past the public gardens, then through the old part of Nice, and gradually ascended Castle Hill, coming out on a plateau overlooking the bay, where either side of the superb roadway is lined with the villas of winter residents. Flowers hung over the high white walls shutting in these tropical homes. Now and then a row of terraces, vari-colored with flowers and grass, peeped above their limestone boundaries or gleamed through the bars of a broad iron gate. The chief pleasure, though, until the villas were passed, was in bowling over the smooth road and in inhaling the salt air.

All at once, by a broad turn, they left the homes behind them, and while, on their right, the barren hill-sides towered, on their left, with nothing to break the view, reached the vast expanse of sea and sky. The horses sped onward, the wheels rolling over the fine road with the smoothness of those of a railway carriage. No vehicles were in sight. Not even the echo from the hoof of some equestrian's horse reached their ears. There was not a cloud in the sky. No wind stirred.

Henry took Madeline's hand. He often did it these days.

"Does it not all breathe peace on earth, good-will to men, dear?" she whispered.

"Can you say that with all your heart, Madeline?"

"Yes," she said softly but firmly, looking into his faded eyes with sweet intensity of expression, "I can."

"Does the good-will you have shown to me, Maddie, come from your very heart of hearts?"

"It does, Henry," and she gently pressed his hand. Then she added with a sincerity that must have been convincing to the most unbelieving, "Why not, dear?"

They were on the heights above Villa Franca. Far below them lay the gray little town circling round its deep cove in which two men-of-war rode at

anchor. Above it, straggling along the side of the hills were the olives, their silver-lined leaves soft against the pale blueness of the sky. Far ahead of them gleamed the white curves of the Corniche. They halted a few minutes, looking over the view in silence.

"Shall we go further, Henry?"

"I think not. I feel tired."

As they turned, a horseman passed them. Madeline recognized the frank manliness of his bearing. He rode well and appeared to better advantage than she had yet seen him. The serene equability and serenity of the man was like a tonic to her. He bowed, and presently, while they were both watching him, he disappeared down the hill leading to Villa Franca.

"Who is that, Madeline?"

"A Mr. Dascom."

"O, yes, I recollect. A fine looking man."

"Is he not? If he were on a sea-horse, one might take him for Neptune. He makes me think of one of Homer's Greeks."

"That blonde type needs to be large to look strong. It is the persistent type, whether in the Greek, the Celt, the German, or the Anglo-Saxon. Tell the driver to go faster, dear. I feel singularly tired."

"Brace yourself a little against me. There!" Madeline put her arm behind him, as he closed his

eyes. He sank toward her slightly, but otherwise appeared as usual.

"My dearest," she said a few minutes later, as they came under the shadows of the high walls inclosing the villas, "do you feel very faint?"

"Not—very!"

Soon they began to descend the Castle Hill. Then they came down to the sea level. She felt the weight growing heavier against her. "We are almost home, Henry."

No answer.

"Faster, driver," she cried.

The man touched the horses and they flew along the smooth road.

Henry had turned slightly in his seat, as he sank lower and lower. She could not see his face.

At last they crossed the Paillon, came out beside the Gardens where a band was playing, then along the esplanade thronged now with people, then upon the yellow sand covering the drive in front of their Italian hotel.

The clerk came down the steps to meet them just as Mark rode up.

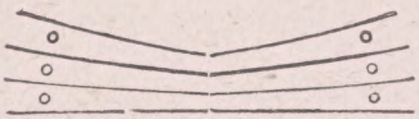
"Please help my husband very carefully," whispered Madeline, a little paler than usual. "He is faint."

The clerk looked in Henry's face, then wonderingly at Madeline, then turned and beckoned silently to

Mr. Dascom. "Madame," he said, "if you will get out on your side, I will hold Mr. Winchester."

Madeline did so, and in the second while she was descending, the clerk whispered to Mark,

"He is dead!"



BOOK TWO.

CHAPTER I.

A HEIDELBERG EPISODE.

WILL the reader transport himself with me to Heidelberg, that gray old university town in the valley of the Neckar at the point where it widens out into one of those extensive German plains cultivated with the care given to an American kitchen garden. As it is an anniversary year for the university, the city is filled with strangers and bright with the gayest life of which it is capable.

The red sand-stone walls of the old castle tower in majestic beauty from the side of the commanding hill they crown, while high above them, like a natural fortress, rise steeper hills, threaded with paths through delectably shady solitudes. The long avenue, leading from the railway station, flanked on either side by hotels or pensions, its space set off on the right by a broad, linden-shaded walk, widening here and there into a garden or booth, conducts one straight to the castle, that Mecca of youthful lovers, and near enough to the university buildings to make it a popular resort.

This avenue leads the pedestrian past an ancient Lutheran church sunk a few feet below the level, and surrounded by an inclosure filled with grass and flowers and shrubbery. A little further on a fine carriage drive ascends the hill to the castle, but lovers, travelers and students delight in a steep ascent merging higher up into the drive, and once the only approach, and picturesque enough still to transport the foreigner to the sixteenth century.

This lane or alley is bordered on either side by houses of the humblest description. Its cobble stones are rough or sunken, and creep up to the very doorways. Shoemakers, laundresses, small boarding-house keepers, and laborers from the surrounding farms, or those connected with the extensive castle repairs, are the chief occupants of these homes. Such homes in Germany are invariably well filled with daughters, and in a town where hundreds of youths from all christendom flock to learn to study, fight and love, a street like the one I have described teems with romances.

It is four o'clock of a July afternoon, the sky is spotted with round, cottony white clouds sailing together and then dispersing, but revealing against their softness, depths of clearest blue. A light breeze stirs the leaves on the wooded hillside. The streets are filled with professors whose stout, florid wives lean lovingly on their arms, submission and docility

clothing their patient features and completing the story which the thundering, dictatorial voice and authoritative manner of their lords and masters begin. As far as the eye can reach, students past and present make the streets gay with their varicolored caps. Here a couple walk arm-in-arm, there a solitary, white-faced youth paces with funereal tread, with an expression fit for the catacombs, and giving the military salute to a passing acquaintance. Yonder is a group hand-in-hand, singing a hilarious song; presently they separate, going down one and another of the narrow crooked streets on the left. Scarred faces are everywhere. Some of the cuts white but deep, although years have passed, others freshly made and dearer in their pain and ugliness to their possessors than a degree. It is too early in the afternoon for the exodus to the castle grounds to begin, but not too early for one tall figure to have already commenced the ascent of the steep alley.

The young man hastened forward, his eyes fixed upon the latticed window of a little gable hanging far over the way. The window was closed and faced him with a sphinx-like stare. Here and there along the alley, small children at play were seated on the cobble stones; others sat still, in profound and happy contemplation, as they munched a piece of black bread or gnawed an onion. Dogs of all sizes and colors wandered about with canine familiarity, mak-

ing discoveries of perfumes hidden away in dark corners and lifting their heads to heaven as some new odor greeted them, with the air of a university savant. Dogs and children and students and the adult occupants were as much at ease among these complex odors as a gardener is in the sweetness of his conservatory. Even the young man whom I have mentioned, had he attempted a description of his surroundings, would doubtless have mentioned the ethereal blueness of the sky, the picturesqueness of that little window, and revealed an inward elysium of passion that eliminated whatever was undesirable, filthy and prosaic.

The negation of the undesirable, filthy and prosaic does not, however, blot them out of existence. If the fact had amounted to the effort, earth would long ago have been heaven. What a strange conjunction that is, though, when two natures touch each other with magnetic attraction, and the experience to one is but an episode, and to the other it is life! Is it fickleness or indifference that much learning, travel, and society induce? Is it merely a divine discontent that seeks and changes and thirsts, because from so much in the past it argues still more and more in the future? Is experience of whatever kind of such essential value, that any conceivable earthly suffering is to be counted as nothing?

Some of the students at Heidelberg asked themselves such questions and gave themselves a large freedom through their skill in moral dialectics. If they enjoyed and women suffered, oftener than not rude peasant women, did not such women, after all, receive a certain compensation? But, was it enough to strike a harmony across all the chords of their being, like some vagrant wind, and then leave these simple souls to rust out in unloved disgrace?

Carroll Saxby did not, however, fret his mind with such questionings as he climbed that hill. What a light broke across his face, as the lattice all at once swung open, and a plump hand shook a gay-colored handkerchief in the air an instant, and then disappeared. A few more long strides, and he was at the door opening on the street.

No fear of disturbance. No other occupant in that simple room all the day long than the little Swiss lace-maker who had drifted from Vitznau to Heidelberg with her father, who was working during the summer on the castle repairs.

She wore her Swiss costume as a city lady does her jewels. Her very simplicity and vivacity made love-making a thing contagious in itself. So Carroll Saxby had discovered. Every time he came was to be the last, but every time he left his entanglement was deeper.

All through his student years he had kept free from a liaison, and now, on the eve of taking his degree, he did not intend to soil his honor or mar his career. He wished from the very bottom of his heart that he had never seen Rosalia. But he had! His life, like most others, was being shaped by forces which he had not taken into account.

He opened the door. There stood Rosalia in the very middle of the sanded floor. Her chestnut hair was pierced by a long, silver spike. Her dainty feet and ankles looked still smaller in their black stockings and slippers. Her black skirt fell in full, straight folds to just abovethe pretty ankles. Above her black bodice rose the high white waist, and the sleeves, with their wing-like starched puffs reaching to the elbow, left her round arms and small hands exposed.

Rosalia's face was undeniably rustic in its transparency and sweetness. It had the strength and healthfulness of the mountain phlox. But over it played as many lights and shadows in a minute, as chase one another, on a sunny day, across a bit of meadow high up on the Alps. She was like an April day in mood, and like August in certain staying powers of warmth.

She gave a bright, rippling little laugh, as Carroll closed the door. The movement through her form shook the silver chains depending from her bodice in intricate loops.

He gazed at her a second in undisguised pleasure, then, leaning against the door, held out his hand, and said, "Come here!"

She looked askance, twirled her chains, colored, laughed, and stood still.

"Come!" He leaned forward.

For answer, she looked down, a subtle, fleeting, merry smile peeping in and out from the corners of her mouth. Then she looked up, her deep, blue eyes brimful of mischief, her plump little hand lifted to her cheek, and smiled and gazed at Carroll.

All at once, with one stride, he sprang forward, seized her in his arms, kissed her hair, her brow, her mouth, over and over, and Rosalia lay in his arms, and smiled and flushed and kissed back, like a child.

By-and-by, when the steady thud of footsteps on the cobble stones told them of the stream of people ascending to the castle grounds to the open-air concert, Carroll asked Rosalia to go there with him for coffee and music.

He had never asked her to accompany him before, and no maid was more gay or thoughtless or got ready with more alacrity. She looked still prettier in her flat-crowned and narrow-brimmed straw hat trimmed with black ribbons.

Carroll had a passing consciousness of meeting his friends, while walking with this bewitching peasant,

They faded from his care or his thought, as he took her hand and climbed the remainder of the hill. It seemed as though all the pleasure of his whole past life was as nothing compared with this walk beside Rosalia.

Carroll Saxby, at twenty-three, had perfect theoretical and local historical knowledge of student intrigues. They had amused him, half disgusted him, but their atmosphere was too pervasive for him to have a great personal abhorrence, except on the score of ultra fastidiousness. Aware of a vacillating temperament, he had simply kept out of temptation.

But this pretty Rosalia in her mourning garb, while losing nothing of the picturesqueness of her Canton costume, was as dainty and harmonious and vital a bit of human mechanism as it was possible to conceive.

An American conscience, refined by enthusiastic study of German sentiment in literature, is a curious anomaly. In Carroll's case, the result up to this juncture had been moral purity, utterly uninfluenced by religious conviction.

It is of little moment to theorize on the inflammability of a nature that has never felt the contact of fire. And because some substances ignite at a very low degree, it is no proof of the non-combustibility of others. The oxy-hydrogen flame produces the most

consuming heat. As this flame is caused by the mad rushing together of two elements, so two natures, under the simplest conditions, and because of an overwhelming attraction between those primary forces of being as common to the savage as the savant, may find themselves inextricably and ruinously blended, unless subject to a spiritual law still stronger.

When Carroll and Rosalia reached the plateau where the castle grounds began, they paused by common consent. Below them lay the gray town, before them the castle walls, and an ancient ruined bastion gradually assuming its original shape under the hands of the masons. Further on, winding walks and woody vistas invited them.

He did not let go her hand. He felt the firm, full pulse, throbbing in her round wrist, and the touch of those flexible fingers clasping his was delicious. It was part of the blue sky above. Innumerable snatches of passionate song from Heine and Goethe swept through his mind.

Rosalia looked off over the enchanting prospect, then at his face, under her curling chestnut lashes, and half smiled, while leaning perceptibly nearer.

He put his arm around her waist, and she yielded a second.

Inside the walls they met other lovers; whole families, the German *pater familias* appearing

perhaps at greater advantage out-of-doors with his children than anywhere else. They wandered up what had been the main approach, across the moat, looking down into a deep hollow overgrown with a perfect wilderness of bushes and underbrush, and forming a somber glen.

"It is dark and sad here," said Rosalia. "Come!" and seizing Carroll's hand, she made a feint of dragging him away.

"Hark!" She clasped her little hands in listening delight, half turning her head to catch a strain of music.

"Come! Come!" and dancing down the statel avenue backward, the mottled sunlight glinting over her agile figure, and touching the buckles of her low shoes, she beckoned him forward.

He followed, fascinated with the life and movement and grace of the black and white robed fairy. He had seen her many times before, but never, it seemed to him, half so pretty or in such perfect harmony with his desire and her environments. It was easy to forget her father and the cottage and the alley, and that she was a peasant and he an only son with every worldly expectation.

He was ambitious and cautious, ordinarily, but, as that afternoon lengthened its golden hours, and he sat or walked beside this birdlike creature, never saying much but never still, and looking and acting

like some pastoral Psyche, the present moment became all. He was no Cupid, however, who could bear his stolen prize to some secret place, and live and love, both trusted and unknown.

The sunshine, and the Castle with its legendary witchery and the fine orchestra under the great lindens, combined with youth and longing to turn a day into a lifetime for Rosalia.

They wandered on in the twilight shadows, and, coming out on a vast terrace commanding the Neckar, the city, and the beautiful slopes beyond the river, deserted now by all save lovers, they sat down and gave promises which the one believed and the other made with reckless disregard of truth or consequences.

All summer long, Carroll Saxby lingered in Heidelberg. The great throng of students and guests had gone hither and thither, but the buzz of returning life to the university buildings in the autumn roused him definitely to the fact that the time he was to have given totravel had slipped away in Rosalia's society and love. He cared for her no less than on that fatal July afternoon. A year of special study in Berlin, however, demanded the severance of these ties; he certainly could not take this Swiss peasant with him.

Rosalia, with the submission and suppressed curiosity so characteristic of the lower classes in

Europe, had never disturbed his enjoyment by anxious queries about the future. With a new life tugging at her strong and passionate heart, a hungry fear sometimes lurked in her eyes which she chased away with a gayer laugh than usual or some bit of coquetry delightful in its artlessness, when Carroll chided her for a silence which he understood only too well. She was learning the art of smiling while her heart was weeping. Women of all classes sooner or later acquire this accomplishment.

"Rosalia," said Carroll, one afternoon in October, "shall you be sad if I go away from you for a little while?"

She gave a smothered little gasp.

"Away from me? From your Rosalia? Your poor Rosalia?" She seized his hand and laid her cheek on it, kissing it as she did so.

That kiss scorched. Many a time in the months that followed he lifted that hand with the other, looked at the spot touched by the kiss, and felt the warm breath of the little Swiss upon it. The very softness of the winds recalled the velvet of her cheek, the wash of rain against his window the burdened, trembling sigh that escaped her as she pleaded, "Don't go away!"

"I must. My father's orders are imperative. Fathers, you know, must be obeyed. But I will come back."

"When?"

"I cannot tell; but before a great while. Listen, Rosalia; how would you like to go to Paris? I could reach you more easily there. I will give you enough money for the journey and to live on till Christmas. In Paris, you can earn more, doubtless, for your lace, than here, and—and I can come more easily to Paris than to Heidelberg. Would n't you like to go to Paris?"

"Yes. But my poor little father—he cannot go to Paris."

"He has forsaken you, anyway. Go, and perhaps he will become reconciled."

She shook her head; then with a little wail, "You will not leave me You will come back!"

"I will, I will! I promise you."

He got up and paced the floor in perplexity. An impulse to marry this little woman seized him. Then pride, and ambition, and fear of life-long complications restrained him.

He came back to her.

"Rosalia, darling, I will go to Paris with you. I will find you a home. Look up, my birdling, my sweet one, we will go away to-morrow. Trust me for the future. I cannot see my way clearly, now, but I shall, later. Say that you will trust me, Rosalia."

She threw her arms about his neck, and, clinging there, wept with peace and love and anticipated loneliness. She did not reproach him with the fact that she had given all. Women have a curious fashion, in great extremities, of keeping silence, either from self-abnegation, or the uselessness of the accusation.

If Carroll had been less passionate, he would have left Rosalia where she was. To transport a woman in whose ignorance lay much of her innocence to a city where the chances were innumerable that she would come in contact with creatures who would laugh at her for her trust and urge her to make capital out of her shame was a thoughtless, dastardly thing. But with the time for leaving at hand, and the expectation of going to Paris for a month in the winter, Carroll cared for little else but his own pleasure, and to quiet Rosalia for the present.

The next day the latticed cottage was closed. What a multitude of impressions surged across Rosalia's vacant, but amiable little brain during the first long journey. But, although her mind was vacant it contained large spaces to be filled. She had great capacity for all manner of sensuous enjoyment, and a vigilant eye that saw and recorded everything. The Rosalia who, a year ago, for the chance of a ride, was willing to be packed with greasy Italians and odoriferous Germans into a third-

class car blue with smoke was different from the Rosalia who, snugly tucked up on the soft gray cushions of a first-class car, watched the spinning landscape or the handsome face of her lover.

Daily association for three months with a gentleman had given this peasant a thousand intuitions of which before she was only half conscious.

Rosalia and Carroll were young enough to forget the future, substantially, in the present, and, say what we will about the short-sightedness of youth, it is a lost art growing ever more valuable to the aged.

"You shall have a suite of small rooms, with the dearest kitchen, where you can live by yourself and make lace and be as happy as a lark all the day long. You must not go out at night alone, Rosalia; I would not like that. There will be a hundred sights to please you. I am only afraid you will forget me before I can come back. Do you think you will for get me, little one? Say never! Never!"

"Never!" She clasped her hands and said the word with such tragic fervor and pathos that Carroll started. Her sincerity penetrated the very core of the delusion of constancy in which he was trying to wrap himself while with her. What if he never did come back—only, of course, because he never could! What then? Was he not mad to train this clinging, if earthly nature, in the deepest vocabulary of affection? And this he had done day by day,

growing deeper and deeper in love himself through the responsiveness he awoke. He did love her! And the future? "Curse the future!" he said to himself in anger, when hot shame stirred his conscience. Perhaps he might marry Rosalia. It was not as if he had deliberately appropriated her life. It had all happened, quite by accident. A fate had overtaken them both, and they might have to take the consequences according to the limitations of their stations in life—which meant all the consequences for Rosalia, of course, and none for him.

A tiny suite of rooms was found under the shadow of quaint St. Sulpice. Finally, after a week of sight-seeing, and pleasure which was greater for the very poignancy of the near parting, that last day came, that last hour, and, try as she might to repress her feelings, Rosalia was in a cold tremble of fear and dread and grief that left a streak of purple whiteness along the edge of her pretty lips and a stricture about her heart that made her eyes large and dry and bright, and shook her frame with sudden chills.

"My darling," said Carroll, walking from one to another of the little rooms with her, while the cab which was to take him away stood at the door, "I shall be here—and here—and there. Wherever you go, I shall be at your side. When you sleep, your hand will be in mine, and when you sit down at our little table, I shall be opposite. If you think I am

close beside you, it will be almost as if I were. Cheer up, precious. See, now it is October. When Christmas comes—only three months—I shall come back. You say nothing, my darling. Can't you give me one little word for *bon voyage?*"

"*O, mon ami, mon ami,*" said Rosalia, with a piteous smile. "Three months are a lifetime when we love. I have a great fear, and such a pain," and she clasped her hands over her heart. "I was never alone before!"

"There! There!" and Carroll took her in his arms. She clung to him while he kissed her and strained her to his heart. "I swear to you, Rosalia, I shall come back at Christmas."

Covering her face with kisses, and rushing out of the room, he hastened down the stairs and drove to the train.

CHAPTER II.

A REVELATION.

AFTER her husband's burial, Madeline felt as though she had been dropped into a great silence. She had expected that when she found herself as she was now, she would return to America immediately and take up life under the healthful if prosaic conditions of women who have never had or appear never to have had heart-breaking trouble. But to return seemed the last thing possible at present.

She had no social ambitions. She had no relatives, and no friends except Mrs. Saxby. Rebecca surely did not need her, and she, why, she had been starved so long, that she had forgotten what it meant to have her feelings stirred.

She lingered a few weeks aimlessly in Nice, and then, wearily made preparations for a journey South.

It was the day of her departure.

She leaned against the shutters of her dismantled parlor, gazing listlessly and tearlessly upon the animated scene immediately below, and then upon the sparkling freshness of the blue sea. The unclouded sun struck everything with dazzling brightness. The ocean looked as though it had never been lashed by a storm, the moving crowds as though death had never decimated their ranks.

Why could everyone simulate happiness better than she? But she—she was neither happy nor unhappy. She was like the exhausted, lifeless moon, although shedding no reflected light. There was no one in the wide world from whom she could even borrow radiance.

Meanwhile, the porter knocked to ask if her trunks were ready. She watched them carried out. Then she turned, gave one last, fleeting look at those silent rooms, the sunlight falling in lonely, mottled bands across the carpet, and with a sigh shut the door. At the head of the stairs, she came face to face with Mark Dascom.

They paused, from a mutual impulse.

He had been so kind to her, during all these heavy, lifeless weeks, and somehow this kindness suddenly emphasized her coming loneliness.

She held out her hand.

"I am just leaving, Mr. Dascom. I hope you received my note of thanks and my good-bye. Thank you once more for all you have done for me."

He waved his hand as if he would dispose of her thanks in that way, and said, "No, I have not received it yet. I did not know you thought of leaving Nice. May I ask where you are going, Mrs. Winchester?"

"To Rome."

"Shall you remain long?"

"I do not know. Good-bye."

He took her hand, and would have held it, involuntarily, but she withdrew it with a look of reticent dignity and sweetness, and, turning away, went down stairs.

He stood still and watched her. Should he ever see a step and smile like hers again? The black dress swept the last stair, a whiff of air caught the black veil, which fluttered back an instant. Then she was gone.

Still Mark stood there, alone, the long corridor stretching right and left, the marble staircase staring at him with its grimy whiteness.

He drew his great height up, finally, a pale, high light gleaming from his blue eyes, as a pent-up exclamation escaped him.

"My God, I love that woman!"

With this abrupt and naive confession, his desire to protect her returned in overwhelming force. He could not let her go to Rome alone. He did not stop to consider the consequences should his attention annoy her.

He hastened to the office, asked for a time-table, and ordered a cab.

Madeline had gone with the hotel stage, and, as that started a half hour before each train, the chances were that he would be in time.

Hastening to his room he commanded his astonished valet to pack a valise in five minutes, studied his time-table meanwhile, and then, ten minutes later, leaving directions should he not return, he was gone.

The long, black train was just about to start out of the station as Mark rushed on the platform, ticket in hand. The first-class cars were ahead, and already closed. A solitary guard was in sight, hanging to the railing of the last car and about to lock the last door. Mark waved to him. The next second he was inside, the heavy brass latch was clasped into its deep socket, he slipped a fee into the guard's hand, and settled back into his seat as the train moved off toward the port of Nice.

He was in a car full of bare-headed and greasy Italians, redolent with garlic and stale wine, their black eyes fixed upon him with rustic curiosity, their

dirty fingers ever and anon creeping to his coat to feel its texture. Otherwise they were respectful, and, when he condescended to notice a bambino almost as nude and quite as beautiful as if it had been the original for one of Raphael's cherubs, the women chattered like magpies, and the older children smiled with a bland delight which gave him a *dolce far niente* feeling, despite his desire to change his carriage as quickly as possible.

At Mentone the baggage was examined. Here there would be every possible risk of meeting Madeline, and that he must avoid if he could, although he was prepared to take the consequences should he be discovered. So he beckoned to the guard again at the first stop, bargained to secure the examination of his valise as the last piece, and then inquired whether there were many first-class passengers.

"*Cinque, sole.*"

He felt relieved. She could have a compartment to herself, at least for the present. It now occurred to him that she was evidently traveling without a maid, and another care consumed him lest she should be alone at night. He hoped there would be some other lady to share her coupé later.

When the train left Mentone, he had secured a vacant compartment immediately behind hers, and then gave himself up to reflection.

His object was too clear and justifiable to himself for him to question what he was doing for an instant. He plainly saw, however, that his course would be unexplainable to Mrs. Winchester except on one supposition, should they chance to meet. It might delay their further acquaintance; it could not prevent it. Moreover, it was perfectly apparent that there were many journeys after this one was finished, that she would have to take alone. No matter! She was in deep trouble now, and he would see her safely in Rome, before he returned to Paris.

Time and fate would make opportunities. He had waited forty years to love a woman, and he believed that the long delay carried its own promise of reciprocity.

On the train sped—under the shadow of the silvery olives, through the rounded and sparsely wooded foot-hills of the maritime Alps, on toward "Genoa the Superb," past flashes of the Mediterranean irridescent with purple and crimson seaweeds, then on beyond the marble city of the new world navigators, like a vast, inhabited amphitheater, on through scores of smoky tunnels following one another in quick succession, until the night came down, and the southern stars shone out, and the surging roar accompanying the rumble of the train was all there was to tell them when they were close upon the rocky coast.

A man does not reach middle age without having many and complex theories of life, to say nothing of a host of experiences which he may think forgotten, but which, nevertheless, affect his conduct. Such theories and experiences especially affect his emotional nature. A man or woman of forty is not so much incapable of overpowering emotions as they are cautious of individuals and circumstances calculated to awaken deep feeling. They merely withhold themselves from tampering with dangerous conditions. An affection must be tremendously worth the while to a deep nature that has attained middle age. Mark Dascom had never gone out, deliberately, as many men do, to seek a wife. He did not disapprove of such a course. It rather amused him, suggesting, a little sharply, a business-like appraisal of values. Thoroughly prosaic and common-place in matters pertaining strictly to business, he had waited all these years for sentiment to direct him, if he ever married. He had loved Madeline instantly and absolutely. His love was not yet a passion. It was rather a great faith—an intellectual conviction of a many-sided superiority.

He had known other unambitious, handsome, devoted women, but they had not stirred a pulse of his nature. Rather the contrary; for ambition and vanity combined are the key to the power of some highly agreeable and attractive women. If you add

to ambition and vanity, selfishness and beauty, there is hardly any measure to the power such a woman may have over the ordinary masculine nature.

As he sat in the corner of his carriage, summing up all of Madeline's known and possible virtues, he was like any ordinary lover. He was unlike the ordinary lover in his absolutely blind faith in the future. This faith, however, was entirely removed from conceit. Some would call it his superstition. Be this as it may, it was the impelling force of his present. What a light way we have of epitomizing these intangible mental processes that govern us mightily for weal or woe.

On the train hurried through the gloom.

Madeline could not sleep. She could think. All her thought was a struggle, though. She believed that she had overcome apathy with duty during her hermit life in America; but here she was, filled with apathy. She knew enough now, however, to resist it.

She stood up in the car, and, leaning against the door, tried to look out. They had left the tunnels and the water. A waste campagna stretched out dimly in the starlight. They were going fast and making fewer stops. Were they on the lowlands between the coast and Pisa? She walked over to the other door, and peered out into an olive woods.

They passed it presently, and against the sky stretched the graceful, shadowy outline of the Appenines.

The change of position rested her. The soft, almost misty darkness, was like a brooding, tender shadow of oblivion. Would it be thus, ten years hence, with her sad past? Would it be softened and veiled with the healing darkness of time?

She pressed her forehead against the cool glass and closed her eyes. At that moment there was a jar, a tremble through the whole train, a quick forward and then backward movement, as if some upheaval had taken place. The next minute she was dashed violently across her solitary carriage, as the whole line of cars toppled over on their sides.

There was the momentary hush which follows a disaster. Then the air was filled with moans and hurried volleys of Italian. Uninjured passengers crept out of their coupés, and tried to see the extent of the damage through the darkness.

The accident had happened so quickly and almost noiselessly, that those who had been asleep and awoke unharmed were too bewildered to stir.

Soon the guards began to run hither and thither, climbing up and opening the doors and looking inside for killed or injured.

Mark Dascom awoke to find himself thrown from his seat to the floor, and sitting there in an almost standing position. He was unhurt, however.

In a second, realizing what had happened, he groped to the door, and, seeing that they were on level ground, he let himself down to the platform for the guards running along the side, and felt his way to the next compartment. He peered inside.

In the dimness he saw the still outline of a woman lying in a heap on the lower side. Forcing open the door, he crept in, looked into the face, and identifying Madeline, picked her up by a tremendous effort, as the car was so tilted that he could not stand; by pulling himself along by the rack above his head, at last he reached the door. A guard swung his lantern toward them. The light flashed into Madeline's face. Blood was trickling down her cheek.

"Wait, sir, and I will fetch a ladder."

Mark sank upon the low sill with his burden. He could not feel a throb of life, as he held her against his bosom. He felt for the arm hanging at her side. As he picked it up, a shiver ran through her frame.

"Thank God, she is alive!" he ejaculated, and then let her arm back as gently as possible, as he suspected that it was broken.

The guard came back quickly.

On descending, Mark found himself near a clump of umbrella pines.

There was a faint light along the horizon, indicating a late moon. Laying Madeline on the bed of pine needles under the trees, he hastened back for his valise which contained a flask of brandy. He bathed her wrists and forced some down her throat. He was as utterly oblivious of the confusion and discord reigning everywhere as though he were in a desert alone with his charge.

The moon rose and flooded the landscape with a pale glow.

Still that obstinate swoon continued, if it were a swoon. He felt desperate. He asked again and again for a doctor, but there was no doctor on the train. Something must be done. While he stood for a moment irresolute, a young woman who seemed to be alone and who had watched Mark's efforts attentively, motioned him to one side, and kneeling beside Madeline, opened her heavy, close-fitting black dress from top to bottom, and loosened all the remaining clothing; then putting her mouth to the still lips, she tried to renew life with her own.

After a long time, the feeblest flutter rewarded her effort. Suddenly, a long, spasmodic breath, which seemed to almost lift the slight form from the ground, succeeded. The woman held out her hand for the brandy.

At last! The hazel eyes opened wearily. The white lips quivered. She turned a solemn, far away gaze first on one and then on the other, looking as if she would search their souls, and fainted again. And so it continued until the gray dawn broke.

Around them, on every hand, stretched the dreary campagna. In the north were the mountains, in the south-east the misty dampness. Not a breath of wind stirred either from the sea or the mountains No relief train yet in sight, from Pisa.

How Mark cursed the decaying sleep brooding over everything Italian. If a doctor did not come soon, or they did not speedily reach Pisa, she would die! While he was walking up and down, every muscle tense with anxiety, his eyes fixed continually in the direction of the city, he discerned a breath of smoke against the sky, and presently the funnel of an engine.

"The train is coming."

He stood over Madeline, looking down at her with tender, sober watchfulness, as she lay under the shade of the lofty trees, her head in the lap of the young woman.

"Where are you going?" said Mark, regarding their companion scrutinizingly.

"To Florence."

"Have you a husband or children? Must you go?"

"I have no one," and the woman spread out her hands in melancholy emptiness.

"Then come with us," he said authoritatively. "You are kind and gentle. You will be well paid."

She flushed and hesitated, then said precipitately, "As you wish, sir. The lady needs me, surely."

"Yes, surely, indeed."

The two hours of their journey to Pisa dragged out in mortal slowness.

Mark sat watching Madeline lying still and white, and in a half fainting condition, on the cushions before him.

The nurse sat on the floor beside Madeline, watching every movement also, and gazing at times into the suffering face with a dull inquiry. Once or twice, she lifted almost caressingly the dark hair threaded with silver, and her eyes filled as she looked at the wound beneath.

"It is bad—that cut!" and she turned to Mark. "I think she will be very sick," she added in a low tone.

"I hope not," he said, idly wondering where his companion had learned her pretty English.

The gray town was at last reached. The leaning tower disappeared behind them as if it were some bent ghost of the ancient past hurrying to mingle itself with the ruins buried on the swampy coast.

The humble denizens of historic palaces falling into a slow decay glided past them on shuffling pattens, like exiled hyperboreans happy in modified snow-shoes. On every hand, as they drove through the city, poverty and splendor hob-nobbed in easy familiarity and made picturesque conditions.

They finally reached a mean hotel with a sonorous name.

Madeline was laid on a painted American bedstead, beneath a vaulted blue ceiling dotted with stars, whose keystone or key picture was a Roman knight of semi-historic times. The room was musty, and ugly with pale colors, and opened upon the esplanade of the muddy Arno. It was a poor place but the best that Pisa could offer.

If upholstery and house decoration were not modern pursuits in Pisa, chirurgery was, for in a few minutes a physician appeared whose touch and glance at once inspired confidence.

Madeline's arm was set, and the wound in her forehead dressed with a deftness that left nothing to be desired. But, although these matters were well attended to, a fever had set in with the passing away of the faintness, and it proved to be as her nurse had foretold; she was very ill.

Her mind was in a tense, clear state, wonderfully unlike the apathy enveloping her the day before.

She watched the maid, watched the doctor, and received Mark's messages with an attentive thoughtfulness that let nothing escape.

After a while, when alone with her nurse, she beckoned her to her bedside.

"Tell me all about this accident. How did you come to be with me? How long was I unconscious? Sit down," as the woman, with her hands folded, stood beside her.

"Madame know she have a fall, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Madeline nodded.

"De car was up-tipped—so!" and over went her pretty hands. "Madame's husband—"

"What?" exclaimed Madeline.

"Is not ze gentleman Madame's husband? No?"

"No, oh, no!"

"Ze gentleman dat comes wid us go into dat car where you was and lift you out—so!—like a woman. I watched him long time before he observe me. He lays you under de tall pine, an dere you lay, dead, he tinks, first, an' all ze night you like dat. He give you brandy. He rub your hands. Den I help. Very leetle use long time!

"De gentleman ask me"—she paused and looked at Madeline searchingly, but the face that gazed back at her was so pure and dignified and haughty,

that she dropped her eyes—"he ask me to stay wid you, an' I say 'yes.' If Madame do not want me, I go, but I want to stay."

"Tell me about yourself," said Madeline kindly, although her heart was beating with a fluttering, angry throb.

"Zare is leetle to tell. Sometime, if I stay wid Madame—Rosalia is alone in de world. Not much place for her, anywhere. Will Madame keep Rosalia?"

Madeline looked at her for a long time.

The face was a good, sad, narrow face, not exactly timid, but hunted looking. Something matronly about its youthfulness suggested motherhood, and Madeline suspected the usual bitter story connected with so many peasants. It was an honest face, and not inquisitive. As she continued to look at Rosalia, the strength of her higher nature inspired the weaker one, and the maid gave expression to what had really been her belief ever since she had first seen Madeline—that here was a great and a good lady whom she would like to serve.

Madeline's first impulse, under the excitement of the fever, was to tell Rosalia enough about Mr. Dascom to set her rustic mind at rest. Her next thought was that, if she were to have a useful and

respectful attendant, this was the last thing for her to attempt. Time would dispel Rosalia's misgivings, if any still remained.

"I am afraid, Rosalia, that I may be ill. You look like a woman I can trust, and I will trust you and keep you."

Rosalia fell on her knees beside Madeline.

"Thank you, thank you, Madame!"

She said these words so daintily, and looked so graceful kneeling there, that Madeline wondered who she was. She was such a curious blending of the lady and the servant.

Rosalia seemed to define her thoughts, and, blushing violently, clasped her hands and almost cried, as she murmured—"I will be so good—so good, Madame."

"Say nothing more now, Rosalia. It is settled for the present. Now help me out of bed. I must dress."

"Madame is too ill!"

Madeline shook her head with determination. "Help me," she commanded, in a low, firm voice.

The maid sprang to her assistance, and proved very skillful. After much difficulty, and with many intervals of rest, she was dressed sufficiently to totter into the adjoining parlor, a soft white shawl about her shoulders, her face contracted and flushed, her dilated, sparkling eyes full of feverish determination."

"Ring, Rosalia."

The porter came.

"Is Mr. Dascom in the hotel?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Ask him to kindly call on me here, as soon as possible."

"Yes, Madame."

Mark appeared almost immediately.

Madeline remained seated, but looked up with reserve at once sweet and cold. She motioned her guest to a chair.

Mark sat slightly bent forward, his surprise so great at seeing her dressed and sitting up, but evidently only by the greatest exertion, that he waited for her to speak with deep anxiety. He of course understood the nature of her communication.

"Do you expect to remain long in Pisa, Mr. Dascom!"

"Possibly a week."

"May I ask where you go from Pisa?"

He looked at her long and steadfastly. "Do you think I followed you from Nice?"

"Yes; I do."

The words dropped from her lips clearly and coldly.

"You think right," he said, after a perceptible pause.

"I did not believe you so thoughtless."

"I was not thoughtless. Circumstances were against me, that was all. And yet, circumstances have justified me, I think. Your life and safety are of infinitely more value than appearances. Right doing, if excused, becomes substantially wrong doing. I would have apologized to you several hours ago, but the apology would only make matters worse. If I had done so, nothing could ever have convinced you that I did not do wrong."

"All the same, you did wrong."

"Let us allow that I did," said Mark, with a gentle gravity that both soothed and irritated her. "You were leaving Nice, alone, in deep trouble, and it seemed only natural and proper since there was no one else to do so, that I should accompany you, unseen, until I was sure that you were safe in Rome."

"And what then?" asked Madeline, a bright spot in the middle of either pale cheek.

"I had not thought any further. I acted under a strong and sudden impulse. I had no wish or intention to obtrude myself upon you, believe me, Mrs. Winchester." He rose and stood before her.

She looked up at him and then down. She had no doubt of the straightforwardness of his motives, so far as he himself was concerned. The world was so crooked and people so artificial that she felt a reflected strength from his simplicity. But she also knew, alas! with the world at the point of progress

it is, that women had better restrain their impulses. She therefore repressed any recognition of this nineteenth century knight errantry, and asked, but with a gentleness that made Mark know that he had impressed the truth upon her, "Will you leave Pisa to-morrow?"

"If you wish it, yes."

She bowed, and then gave him a radiant smile. The breach was healed.

"I would like to rise, Mr. Dascom, but I cannot. I thank you again, warmly, for all you have done for me—and mine. Good-bye, once more."

He took her hand, bowed and withdrew.

She tried to rise, tried to call Rosalia a few minutes later, but the effort made her faint. She did not know anything for several hours, then, and when she did recover consciousness, she was in bed, and both her maid and the doctor beside her.

It was April before she recovered sufficiently to travel.

CHAPTER III.

DEEP-SEA SOUNDINGS.

MRS. CHAUNCY ALLERTON was "at home." She had been at home every Wednesday from four till six since the first of December. It was now the last of March. She was glad that the state of being at home was nearly over for the season. April first would see her free to go anywhere, to do anything, to be anywhere other than "at home" on successive Wednesdays. Still, if April first, by some strange metamorphosis, had had the power to change itself to the December first recently numbered with its ancestors, Mrs. Chauncy Allerton would have forthwith issued a second set of cards and sat in her drawing room in stately readiness to receive anew for two hours of each week for four months.

She was a woman who had a reason for everything she did, and as each reason was discovered, or deduced or induced, it became an infallible law and as binding as the Constitution.

"At homes" were disagreeable things oftener than not for all concerned. Social statics required, how,

ever, that a lady and her house should be accessible, formally, to certain individuals whom the receipt of announcement cards duly specified. Mrs. Chauncy Allerton, therefore, without change of day, had, for ten long years, been at home to her calling acquaintances, from four till six, from December first till April first, and it had chanced that not even death had stepped in to assert a prior claim to this specific time.

Mrs. Saxby accordingly prepared to call on her with an assurance which the high east winds and snowy air did not dampen. She was perfectly sure that though no other guest might call Mrs. Allerton would be at home, and, as she really wanted to chat with her friend, the weather was auspicious.

Rebecca's shining brougham and compact, bob-tailed cob soon brought her to Murray Hill.

The butler, looking like an English lord, swung the wide oak door open, noiselessly swept back the *portiere* of the drawing room like an upholsterer, and in a deep, velvety voice announced,

"Mrs. John Saxby!"

Mrs. Allerton came forward out of her shady solitude, with *empressement*. She had already sat one mortal hour, her thoughts her sole companions, and Rebecca was a godsend. Rebecca was one of the few persons whose social delinquencies would

better be forgiven, and Mrs. Allerton forgave them, therefore, although she had looked and longed for this call all winter.

"My dear, how fortunate!" she exclaimed, taking both of Rebecca's hands and pressing them fervently. "You have come at the eleventh hour—only one more Wednesday!" and she drew back as if the announcement frightened even herself with its awful possibility. "Still, you *are* here, and I am so glad to see you. Come, sit down by me near the window. This ugly March light is too high to make lamps excusable. And yet the drawing-rooms are so dreary without them! Still, I never light my lamps in the day-time after February. I thought it all out, and, take it all in all, March first is the time to begin to get used to the long days. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Rebecca merrily, "I suppose it is, but I must confess that my lamps never troubled me to such an extent."

"O, it is no trouble. It is the habit of my mind. I was born analytic. Do you hear good news from your son?"

"Yes. He will continue his travels till autumn, according to the original plan. Then he will return home to stay."

"Aren't you afraid that you will find him denationalized?"

"O, I think not. I hope not,"

Mrs. Allerton shook her head lugubriously. "It would be a great pity if he did come home disaffected. I think that is what ails Mark. He is as restless as a fish out of water unless he spends half his time on the other side. Nearly all his intimate friends are there."

"I never thought your brother was a society man," and Rebecca opened her soft brown eyes in unfeigned astonishment.

"Neither is he, I am sorry to say. Mark is absolutely nothing. I can't place him. He is so un-American, and, when I am across the water with him, he is un-everything else. It all came from spending so much time at Bonn. I am sure you will find that you have made a great mistake in educating Carroll at Heidelberg and Berlin. Mark has so few of the traits prominent in our family. At least, if he had them by nature, he has lost them all in his Bohemianism. As for reasoning him out of his vagaries, I never heard him reason about anything in my life!" Mrs. Allerton clasped her hands tightly on her lap.

"He never wavers, though, in what he does, and, as far as I can judge, never repents. He seems to know by intuition. That would be very unsatisfactory to me. I have a reason for everything—from my religion to my cook's wages. It saves so much unrest of mind."

Rebecca looked at her and smiled softly. Her friend seemed to her like a fig, the sweetness encased with much resistent toughness. Perhaps it was the toughness which made her so capable.

"Do you think Mark will ever marry?" asked Rebecca abruptly.

"I used to think he would. I fear he never will, however, and I have an equal fear that he may."

"Why?"

"He'll do something queer or something foolish. If I could select a wife for Mark, I would like him to marry, and I am sure he would be happy, too! A wife is the last thing he would accept from *me*, however. There came a time when I stopped all efforts of that sort for Mark. They are never appreciated, anyway, and always misjudged. He has an idea that he would know the woman at once who is to be his wife, if he met her. He thinks she would be a kind of Vishnu to him, recognized by certain infallible, sacred distinctions."

"A very pretty idea!" said Rebecca, with what seemed to Mrs. Allerton undue solemnity.

"A perfect boy's idea! Mark has the ardor of youth in his romanticism. He may have a terrible downfall yet. I do not mind saying so to you, Mrs. Saxby, but Mark has been gone so unconscionably long, that I am very much afraid of some entanglement. O, it's a thousand pities he didn't marry

Miss Buxton. He only needed to ask her. Everybody knew that. Family, property and beauty! Three essentials the men of my family have always hitherto required. Mark laughs at family; think of that!" and Mrs. Allerton expanded her clear, cold, kind blue eyes. "As for a pretty woman, he disdains prettiness. Once in a great while, he says, you find a really handsome woman who is not vain. But a pretty woman—never! Property is no temptation to him. He has such a fatal gift at money-making, that I believe a poor woman would have a presumptive claim to his attention." She sighed.

Rebecca had achieved the object of her call without any self-betrayal, and now, as the high, dreary light had changed to somber twilight, she rose to go.

Mrs. Allerton followed her into the hall, detaining her with an excess of cordiality that never wavered, whatever might be Rebecca's omissions. As Mrs. Saxby's brougham rolled away, she said, "Compton, tell Miss Blanche that I wish to see her in the drawing-room."

A soft rustling on the stairs a minute or two later, preceded the appearance of Blanche. "Do you want me, mamma?"

"Yes, come here," and Mrs. Allerton, patting the sofa beside her, indicated Blanche's seat.

The daughter sat down demurely, and, folding her hands in her lap, said:

"What is it, mamma?"

"Carroll Saxby *is* coming home in the autumn."

Mother and daughter gazed at each other in silence, and as if the fact were of great importance.

"Just in time for your coming out, darling. Nothing could be nicer."

"Twenty other girls in our circle are coming out, too." Blanche pursed her beautiful mouth.

Mrs. Allerton tossed her head, and her daughter flushed slightly with conscious power.

"Not one will have your advantage. I'll trust your American beauty and English breeding. There is not a young man we know who doesn't consider it more of a privilege to talk five minutes with you than an entire evening with any one of the others. Between old Judith and me, no sultana could have been more guarded than you have been. You cannot help being a belle your first season, Blanche. I am sure it will all depend on yourself whether Carroll Saxby proposes. Your father would be pleased, you know. On the whole, no one that we know could be more desirable. Our family and the Saxby money! Fancy your power, Blanche."

For answer Blanche smiled sweetly, but said nothing, tapping her pretty foot a little impatiently and heaving a sigh that might be a yawn. She was well used to these plannings of her mother. She was conscious, too, that she had really brilliant social

prospects, and was not specially averse to Carroll as a future husband. Nevertheless the blood ran too cool in her veins for her to make blunders in either common sense or romance. She had also the rare faculty of being honest with herself, a point in common between her and her Uncle Mark, with whom she was a favorite.

"Well, mamma," said Blanche, finally, and chiefly to break the silence, "whether my choice shall fall on Carroll, or his on me, remains to be seen. Dear me, my coming out is nearly a year off! What might not happen between now and then?"

"Of course, of course. But it is well to be prepared for any event. I thought you would like to know when Carroll is coming back."

"Yes."

Blanche had risen. She was a beautiful girl—tall, long-limbed, her youthful slenderness well rounded. She had blue eyes, not unlike her mother's in their clearness and coldness. Her short upper lip revealed even and very white teeth. Her mouth was finely formed and indicated strength of character, with which the curve of her chin and throat accorded. She might have been Atalanta. There was a Greek simplicity and severity about the knot of flaxen hair held in its place by a long shell pin, the folds of her dark blue dress, and the round but slender contour of her white hands.

Mrs. Allerton had "reasoned" out her daughter's possibilities as she had those of her brother, and though she had had no perceptible influence on Mark Dascom, yet Blanche, she fancied, was as pliable as clay.

Mrs. Saxby meanwhile had reached home in a very thoughtful mood.

A letter from Madeline, mentioning Mark Dascom had tormented her curiosity and awakened her solicitude. It was a year and three months now since Mr. Winchester's death, and although Madeline wrote freely of her life from day to day, she gave no hint of returning. She had passed the first summer and autumn in Aix-les-Bains, and was now in Rome, studying. But there must have been many a long gap of weariness and solitude which study could not bridge. Rebecca felt anxious lest her fine character should grow warped and narrow from recluse habits. She hung just the faintest thread of hope on this mention of Mark Dascom, to which her conversation with Mrs. Allerton had added a little fuel. It would be a strange conjunction of affairs if Madeline made a second brilliant marriage with the odds so much against her. Rebecca fancied the bombshell the news of such an engagement would be in the social camp. She pictured Mrs. Allerton's mortification and communicativeness, for Mrs. Allerton was such a ceaseless talker that when she could not

give her reasons for an event, she was equally garrulous in giving those against it. It was impossible to think of Madeline entering that family without open warfare between Mark and his sister.

Rebecca felt vexed the next minute for fancying a second marriage possible to a woman with Madeline's cold self-restraint. It was true that she had not seen her friend in a long time, and Madeline might have changed very much. Her letters certainly were very ambitionless. Nevertheless, if she were ever to take up her old life again, even in a quiet form, it was time that she came back to New York, and a second marriage would enable her to do this with perfect ease.

Rebecca wrote a long letter to Madeline that evening, dwelling at great length on the danger of forming too strong a love for isolation and acquiescence in conditions that effort and new social ties could remove.

When this letter reached Madeline, she was about leaving Rome for Florence.

It was a mild, sunny day in April when she and Rosalia arrived, toward nightfall. The Florentine valley, opening to the east and west, looked, in its spring freshness, like the chalice of some beautiful flower spreading its petals to the rising and the setting sun. An intense redness bloomed over the western sky, and above it arched the unclouded blue,

against which in bold relief was outlined the heights of San Miniato, Giotto's Campanile, and the huge dome of the cathedral. The Ponte Vecchio, with its battlements of antique buildings of varied heights, looked like some architectural pawnbroker's shop, from whose windows Shylocks might have peered as becomingly as from the Rialto. The city itself, in its grayness and solidity, was like a primeval rock utilized for purposes of human habitation. From every quarter pealed the bells of Campanile church, or convent, striking the violet-scented air with tender sweetness and touching Madeline to tears.

She had risen from her sick bed the year before with a childlike gentleness of spirit, with her old poise of purpose, and a timid, though healthy, desire to make a new place for herself in life.

Rosalia had cared for her with such devotion and was so unobtrusive and silent, that she minded her presence no more than she would have done that of a faithful dog.

As she drove to her hotel, on that balmy evening through narrow streets already filled with darkness and the dampness that even the midday sun rarely dispelled, across squares flanked by mediæval, frowning palaces, and then past the portal of a venerable church, she recalled the wandering of those two solitary, flaming spirits who, as poet and preacher, made the greatest moral fame of Florence.

They had suffered. They had drunk the cup of bitterness to the dregs. Death had remorselessly followed. It had not been so hard as that with her. They had been homeless, and so, it was true, was she. But their sufferings had been for strangers, and hers had been for and through her own.

High above her gleamed the slender spires of San Miniato, and its marbles caught the last beams of the fading light. There the heart treasures of generations were buried, but the spires pointed upward, and over them was the far-reaching blue, beyond which in some undiscovered, spiritual space—who could tell—dwelt those gone before. With such a sky covering the whole world, the gates of heaven were everywhere. The fancy soothed her, and a vague yet comforting sense of companionship with her children filled her whole being.

They drove along the quay overlooking the Arno, now swollen to its utmost size and rushing in turbulent, yellow sullenness under its many bridges. Presently they entered a small square upon which faced a hotel with the name so universal in Europe, —Hotel de la Paix,—and there they settled down till June.

Madeline began a course of reading and study, and spent hours in the Pitti and the Uffizi galleries before

master-pieces to which, although her fingers did scant justice, her eyes and heart paid the reverence and rapture of a devotee.

All day long, and during the night hours too, she gave herself no chance to think of self. She had done that for years. In this solitary life it must never be allowed. "The past is past!" she would exclaim, rising, no matter at what hour she found herself wakeful, and resuming her books. She could not tell one day from another, often, in her relentless discipline.

Rosalia, who knew the signs of sorrow and trouble, as does every living creature who has passed through a fiery furnace, watched this self-repression so systematically pursued with a dumb astonishment, but a sagacious conception that made her more passive than ever.

"The lady lashes herself, but God had to take a poor creature like me in hand," she sometimes murmured to herself.

Although this inner fire of self-mastery consumed Madeline's being, still, the conquest of bitterness, and the petty narrowness revolving around personal conditions, the childish cry for more love for self, more ease of pride,—this conquest, if gradual, was sure. The old Madeline of the years before disgrace and loss came back for a brief period occasionally, but only to

be buried again. The new Madeline could not understand the old Madeline, but the old Madeline would have laughed in derision, could she have caught a glimpse of the nearly consummated evolution of desire and purpose. How useless it would be, did God reveal heaven to us before His purposes had been fulfilled!

In June, when the weather was growing too warm to render a longer sojourn advisable, Madeline made arrangements for their going further North.

While Rosalia was packing the trunks on the last day of their stay, contrary to her usual custom, Madeline went out alone in the afternoon, feeling a sudden, intense desire for the open air and solitude.

She wandered idly along the river, studying familiar objects in the landscape with a good-bye tenderness, and finally reached the entrance to the pretty public gardens. It was too early for the equestrians or the endless line of carriages that a little later would make the tour of the park. She walked on, still following the river side, and sitting down occasionally to rest or enjoy the flowers. She came at last to a long avenue extending for a mile or more under sycamores so thickly planted, interwoven, and clipped, as to make a vast bower of the most delightful shade and coolness.

The sunlight flickered faintly through the heavy foliage, mottling the smooth avenue here and there,

and piercing the woods to the right with a long, slender, dazzling beam. The air was filled with the perfume of roses, lilies and violets. A white, flowering tree shone with a pale glory at intervals among the other trees. A ruin crowning an eminence to the left, in the distance, and looking dim and uncertain in the quivering hot air dancing over the meadows and bare hills beyond the Arno, gave her a far away feeling which took possession of her with overwhelming force. She walked slowly on, this dreamy sensation affecting her almost like a premonition.

No breath of air fluttered her thin, black skirts, clinging in crêpy softness to her fragile, willowy form. Frail as she looked, there was vitality in her step and expression. Her face had the undefinable and pathetic sweetness of patience and unshed tears, but it also revealed a high courage.

She came suddenly upon an immense rose tree set at an angle where it caught the sun, and a mass, now, of the most sumptuous, double pink roses, their heads bent over, and looking as though they would faint with the excess of their own beauty and perfume. It held her spell-bound. She thought of the jeweled plants in Dante's Paradiso, where each flower was a soul, and it seemed to her as if the sweetness of those roses must speak in a heavenly language.

Her parasol dropped over her shoulder, its black edge making a soft shadow on her face. A faint, almost listening smile quivered on her lips. All at once, her fancy dissolved with its very airiness. She looked up with a little sigh. There stood Mark Dascom in the avenue, a short distance off, and looking at her much as she had regarded the flowers.

He came forward, and extending his hand, said:

"You do not own Florence too, as well as Pisa, I sincerely hope?"

She glanced at him a second with straightforward clearness, a slight added paleness settling upon her face, as she replied simply, "I do not own Florence." She said this in a way to disclaim ownership in Pisa, also, and Mark did not know whether she was displeased or afraid, or unwilling to commit herself further.

She had turned and began now to retrace her steps.

"May I walk with you, Mrs. Winchester?"

"Yes."

"Have you entirely recovered your health?"

"Entirely, thanks. When did you arrive?"

"This morning. I leave to-night."

"Yes?" She looked up and smiled. "You make a short stay."

"I would not dare remain longer."

"You certainly run a risk in coming from the North at this season."

"I was conscious of that, before starting," and he looked at her intently.

She colored slightly. "I presume you have become hardened to all climates by this time. I forgot what a traveler you are."

"On the contrary, I am extremely sensitive to atmospheric changes. Still, they never deter me."

"You may be overtaken with a serious illness, sometime. You would better be prudent."

"We may be prudent in having counted the cost and risked everything on a journey."

"I can hardly imagine any enterprise so valuable as that. In middle life, health and peace of mind are precious possessions."

"Sometimes one depends on the other. What then? Which would you sacrifice first?"

"I could hardly judge for another."

"You do not look like one of those material persons who would preserve health at all costs, Mrs. Winchester."

"I am sorry to be so uncomplimentary, Mr. Dascom, but you have precisely that air," she said, laughing.

"Then appearances are against me," said Mark, smiling, but greatly relieved to obtain this familiar little concession.

They came out of the shady avenue, and began crossing an open space laid out in flowerbeds and grass plots, and a favorite resort for nurses and children. There were a score of little ones chasing one another over the lawns or playing with their *bonnes*. Madeline, feeling tired, sat down on a bench.

Across the lawn stretched a line of pepper trees, whose fringe-like foliage cast a shadow over a row of potted orange trees, all in bloom, and saturating the hot air with their heavy perfume. Below these, trained and trimmed with Italian precision, but full of flowers, was a third row of tea-rose bushes, whose yellow, white and pink blossoms mingled their more delicate odor with the fragrance of the orange trees.

They gazed on the beautiful bloom and greenness in silence. No two persons could have been more fully conscious of each other's presence. No two persons could have felt more entire present independence of each other's opinion.

He was aware that he possessed Madeline's respect, and at this stage in their acquaintance, that was sufficient. Ever since that night when she lay injured under the umbrella pines and had first gazed into the faces of her watchers, Madeline had been aware of his love. At Pisa, her only thought was to send him away as quickly as possible, and with as much kindness as the circumstances would permit. "And yet

here he is again!" was what she said to herself over and over, sitting beside him in the Casaine. She did not get any further in her thought. She felt under no moral or social obligations to make herself agreeable, and, not being inclined to conversation, continued silent.

Mark looked down at her once or twice while apparently making a study of the pepper trees and the children. But, even in the midst of all the brightness and movement around them, their mutual silence grew oppressive. Mark was willing enough to break it, but, say what we may to the contrary, voicelessness is very contagious. If only she would say something about herself he could follow it up, and gain a clue to her thoughts and occupations. But she sat there as serene as a sphynx, and with a beauty as delicate and pervasive as that of the flowers across the lawn.

He had intended to talk to her about himself, somewhat, but, as this could be done only incidentally, and as if by the purest accident, he cast about in his mind desperately for some other subject. He thought of many acquaintances that they must almost inevitably have in common, but then again, with her past what it was, acquaintances might prove to be the most objectionable subject in the world.

At this juncture Madeline herself said:

"Tell me about your travels, Mr. Dascom. I have gained the impression that you have been everywhere."

"Not that! But I have gone further than many, and had 'vicissitudes both by land and sea.'"

"That sounds very appropriate in Virgil's own land. I am making a comparative study of Latin and Italian, and get much enjoyment out of it."

"If you commence on that line, you will have to continue indefinitely; take all the Aryan languages and include a search for their ancestral birth-place. I believe it is located in Europe now, instead of Asia."

"Somewhat, perhaps, on the principle the Greeks adopted when they made everything emanate from Athens."

"Not exactly. It is not necessarily Rome or Paris or London. It is Germany. The new theories seem very plausible to me, too. I never have been enough of a mystic to have a prejudice in favor of theories that point to India as the conservator of everything most intellectual. Why not Europe, which is certainly the center geographically? There should be no waste in any kind of development. One might imagine Europe as the little spot of heat from which the whole flame of knowledge emanated, east and

west, a wind of favoring influence to waft it first in one direction and then in another. Are you very fond of philology?"

"O, yes."

She spoke indifferently, and as if she might relapse into silence again.

So Mark hastened to add:

"I have a curious old English translation of Juvenal in my pocket now, that I picked up the other day." He took out the tiny book and handed it to her.

She glanced through it curiously, and then, as the volume opened of itself at the preface, a sentence attracted her attention. It read in this wise:

"Should any female presume to cast her eyes over the flaming poesies of Juvenal's satires, reading therein what may well make the strongest man falter, let the translator assure herself that she will forever forfeit the respect due to the natural modesty of a virtuous woman."

She pointed to the passage, and, looking at Mark, said:

"How hardly women have escaped in this nineteenth century from the superstition that ignorance is innocence. If I could stand yonder, in the doorway of Galileo's house, with this book in my hand, here in Florence, where Dante bewailed the same corruption that Juvenal did in Rome,—the corruption of both cities in selling their fairest daughters for dowries,—I would say the world moves."

"Such sales are effected in London, Paris and New York to-day. I have a beautiful niece, white as yonder lily," and he pointed to a resplendent, tall flower. "She will be offered to the highest bidder. She is a hot-house bloom that will mature for the market by next autumn."

"There are lilies as white as that who have kept their purity through just such knowledge as this," and Madeline tapped the book.

"You use very masculine English."

"I did not know that there is sex in English, as there is certainly not in knowledge. Sex is a purely physical limitation."

"What do you mean?"

"What do you think I mean?" She looked at him with a Diana-like severity, as if she were Hypatia questioning some athletic Greek attending her lectures.

"I suppose you mean that a woman can do just what a man can."

"O, no—not that!" and she waved her hand in deprecating contempt. "Surely not that! To know is not to do. I merely mean that a woman may do what she can."

"Your epigram is easy to remember."

"The belief in it has saved many a woman's reason, and I do not know but that it has saved her soul."

"But your epigram does away with all moral issues."

"Morality requires a corollary, but applicable to both sexes. You cannot put all possible issue into one epigram any more than you can into one geometrical proposition. The statement that a straight line is the shortest possible distance between two points does not make the statement of other mathematical truths useless. Each new one merely presupposes the old ones, that is all."

Her head sat on her neck like a bird's whose attention is arrested. Her eyes were full of light. "Only a woman, who may do what she can, is a moral agent," she added, as if this were conclusive.

"You do not think that men were born the natural leaders of women?"

"Do I think that this hand is made to rule this one?" and she extended first one slender gloved hand and then the other. "Do I think my right eye leads my left?"

She looked at him with almost näive astonishment, as if all that she said were so clear that it was folly to give it expression.

"But one does lead, doubtless, in every case."

"It merely depends upon position, or training, or convenience, or other causes just as incidental. They are supplementary."

"But both necessary."

"As supplements, yes. I cannot imagine a world without men and women both."

"Neither can I," said Mark heartily. "I have not crystallized my views on this subject to the extent that you have yours."

"Crystallization grows out of certain conditions. You never have a view on any subject, I suspect, till there is a need for it. I mean, an opinion so well rooted and grounded that we will live by it or die for it."

"Certainly my views on this subject have no such depth. I presume, in fact, that they would be largely colored by the kind of women I came in contact with. As I told you at Nice, I have known very few, and I really believe that I have never known the latitude and longitude of any single woman's nature. I have a sister, an only sister. When we meet, our natures slip one past the other. They don't even collide. They have never once intermingled so that we saw each other soul to soul, or even mind to mind. I could fancy myself making a warm friend out of a woman who was intellectual only."

"Do not waste your time in that way. Such a woman is always cruel and often vindictive. If she is lymphatic, too, she is a travesty on the best and highest in woman. I am speaking morally," said Madeline.

He had made a discovery. The very earnestness and freedom and even vehemence with which she had spoken, after she had once allowed herself to break the silence, convinced him that she had been much alone, and that when she did allow herself to talk, the sound of her own voice was sweet. But it was sweeter far to him, and these intense convictions showed him the real woman beneath. They betrayed a vitality of thought and feeling as well, for each is needed to fully emphasize the other. She seemed unaware, however, that she had spoken warmly, but her face had a flush he had never seen there before. There was an almost pathetic unconsciousness about her as she arose. It conveyed an intense impression of her solitariness. She seemed momentarily hardly aware of him. Her thought had traveled away into haunts which were for herself alone. She came back though, in an instant, and inquired at what hotel he was stopping.

"Hotel d' Italie," said Mark, hardly able to suppress his eagerness. Would she ask him to call?

"That is near my hotel, the Hotel de la Paix. At what hour do you leave?"

"At midnight."

"Unless you are otherwise engaged I should be glad to see you an hour or two after dinner."

He bowed.

"Good-bye, then, for the present."

She slightly inclined her head. She did not give him her hand, and walked slowly away, with that peculiar poise and airiness of step that so few women have, and which can never be cultivated.

At half past eight, Mark appeared.

He looked about Mrs. Winchester's parlor while waiting. It contained a piano, and an easel on which was a copy of Raphael's Florentine Fornarina. He thought this a curious picture for her to buy, if it were hers. What thought of hers did that face and the strong body with its little hand express? There were many books lying around, and loose piles of mounted photographs. The room in other respects was like the usual vast apartments in old Italian palaces converted into hotels. Its proportions were immense. Its hangings were in bright red. Numerous candles were lighted. There was a huge bowl of roses on a table.

When Madeline entered, Mark was still puzzling over the Fornarina. The contrast was so vivid, as he turned from its Southern fullness of strength, between it and his advancing hostess, that he regarded her as he might have done a moving picture.

She was dressed in a gown of thin white, whose only furbelows were tucks and hems. A bunch of violets at waist and throat, a fall of abundant, creamy black-edged lace from the wrists, and a mass

of it fitting closely to her neck, added to her purity and etherialness of expression. She was indescribably beautiful.

"You are studying my Fornarina," she said, glancing at the painting almost lovingly. "You do not like it, I am almost sure."

"Why?" asked Mark, surprised.

"Because you are physically so strong that you could never gain the rest from it that it affords me. It makes me feel vigorous just to look at it. See, it is not coarse, as some think," and she stepped in front of the picture. "That is a very small hand, but I have seen many a one just as little on the descendants of the ancient Romans in the Trastevere. And they have this same breadth and strength and gracefulness of shoulders. It is a face that has not suffered. It could suffer. If it were thin or older, the fire would be concentrated. There might be too much, that is all. She is to me a dark, glowing, healthy Italian beauty, not great, but sweet, with a pastoral goodness that one would not see outside of Italy. Many a woman like that lives and dies and never knows the heart there is within her. Look! her heart is not awake. She has a heart."

"It becomes very beautiful after your analysis. And, although I am strong, I admire strength, too, even mere physical strength. But that was all

I saw in the picture, and I presume you will agree with me that animal force alone in a human being is offensive."

"Yes, of course. But I never see it alone."

"When it predominates," said Mark, thoughtfully, "it affects me as though it were alone. I can understand the motive that induced Plato to reduce his immense proportions by dwelling in an unhealthy section of Athens until he contracted quartan ague. It was a heroic remedy, I grant, for too much health. There is such a thing as too much health; don't you think so?"

"O, yes. Half the dull people are stupid because they have too much physique for their brains. I suppose they were intended for draught-horses, and missed their vocations. Really, unless one believes in fate, there are many misplaced persons."

"I believe that there are fatal periods in all our lives, when we are like leaves in the eddy of a whirlpool. But people are not misplaced. It is altogether their own fault if they do not adjust themselves to varying or unvarying conditions."

"Do you think so, truly?"

She had not yet sat down, and stood before him with her hands clasped, as if she would draw some kind of comforting help from the statement.

He understood how the effort of years was put into that question, and, although her face and life and

general thought indicated that she had acted as if such a theory were true, still there was something about her that showed that the victory had been hardly won, and as if her battle-field might require the ransom of her life.

For answer, he drew an arm-chair forward for her. She sat down. The red cushions gave her face more warmth.

"I don't approve of too close deductions," he said, after seating himself. "We each understand how far from complete our vicarious sacrifice is, and it is something belonging so peculiarly to ourselves that I doubt whether any one can ever speak except for himself. There have been ups and downs in my own life, but never one that I did not positively know that I could surmount. I do not say that I have fulfilled the measure of my possibilities, but I have never doubted that I could and ought. There is nothing grander in this world than a man or woman who fights that good fight to the bitter end."

For the first time since she had known him, she felt his influence. Her eyes wavered a second and then suddenly filled with tears. She felt afraid of any other human strength than her own, unless it came to her in general ways as through sermons or music. She had dwelt for years, so to speak, in the higher temperate zones of feeling, and this sudden, involuntary response in her soul to something individual,

and meant, she knew, as a direct tribute to her years of endeavor, softened her whole attitude toward Mark. The next instant she was embarrassed lest he should interpret her feeling beyond mere sympathetic emotion.

But Mark was not an interpreter. He was a continual actor. He meant to awaken the slumbering emotions of her nature. He saw that their repressed fire would consume her eventually, if they did not find egress. Say what we may to the contrary, there are times in a woman's life when she has to be helped to the knowledge of her own needs. She is only to be pitied when she is assisted by the wrong person.

He ventured a direct personal question.

"Do you intend to return to New York soon?"

"Yes, I do."

"I should think you would feel homesick, sometimes, living here alone."

"I wish I did. I have been away so long that I feel like a stranger, and shall go back as a stranger. Then I have been alone so long, too, that I am more used to it, even in thought, than to a life full of people. I am sure I shall have a hundred sudden shocks and frictions in taking up life with and for others."

"But it is the only right life."

"O, yes, of course," she replied, with great earnestness. "It is because of the general rightness that I

am going back and going where I belong. You see I believe that New York was meant from all time for my environment. At all events, I understand New York, whether it understands me or not."

"It is no matter whether it understands you any more than that instrument yonder. New York means what you can get out of it, or any other place —Florence, for instance. You have gained in health here, I am sure."

"Yes."

"And painting, and philology, and music."

"A little music."

"Instead of asking you whether you will play or sing for me, I am going to ask you to let me sing."

Her eyes beamed with delighted surprise. They went to the instrument, side by side.

"It is to be an English song?"

"An American song!"

He struck some chords. Then, without preliminary melody, he sang, in a full, resonant barytone,

"My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty."

When he had finished, she leaned upon the instrument and said, "But that is an English air."

He played a few runs while looking at her and beyond her. Then his fingers caressed from the instrument that sweetest and most appealing of all melodies in a foreign land, "Home, Sweet Home."

He sang it with the lingering tenderness of a woman. His voice had fine scope in that immense apartment, and the simple words and simple air a beguiling sadness, where there was nothing to suggest the conditions of the lyric. As he sang the last word, he touched a few chords preliminary to playing Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.

She felt lifted up as if by the grand flight of huge, white wings to a rarified atmosphere of contemplation and serenity.

"Thank you, so much!" she said, softly, when he had finished.

He looked at her with a kind, pleased glance. He drew out his watch. "I have to keep aware of the time, and I regret to say that I must leave instantly. When shall you cross?"

"In the autumn, I think. I shall go North with Rosalia somewhere, for the summer, probably to Switzerland."

"I shall hunt you up."

Her hazel eyes darted an involuntary look of warning. Then she said:

"I do not believe that could be worth your while. You too will return to New York eventually?"

"Yes, but in the interval I hope to see you at least once."

She felt that it would be ridiculous and unnecessary to resist any further, and said quietly, "I presume I shall summer in Interlachen."

When he had gone, she stood just within the door where she had bade him good-bye, motionless for several minutes. He had left with her an odd impression. The blood in her veins had not seemed stagnant before he came, and yet, as she lingered there, she had a curious and unexplainable feeling of being alive, in some new, subtle sense. It was as if she had suddenly gained a youthful flexibility of impulse and volition, and still had all the wisdom and the sadness, alas! of maturity.

"Rosalia," said Madeline on entering her bedroom, "go to bed. I shall not need you to-night. We will not leave till day after to-morrow; so call me in the morning at the usual hour."

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENCOUNTER.

THE day on which they left Florence was heavenly.

Every life has its periods of quiet and activity. The latter often seem the fruit-bearing seasons, but in the former purposes are evolved and problems solved and power stored which are the absolute measure of all that follows.

No sensation in this life is sweeter than that of harmony—that personal harmony, in which one's own mind, body and spirit are in unison, and so assimilative that, no matter what the condition of the weather, the contrariety of circumstances, or the temperament of surrounding people, the spirit has an extractive power of all that is good and sweet and appropriate to itself. This is perhaps as much an absurdity to those who have not felt it as the miracles of Jesus were to Renan, and as great a mystery when we try to offer an explanation as the composition of a lily is from such apparently unlikely

antecedents as earth, air and moisture. But the lilies bloom in profusion, nevertheless, and this surpassing sweetness of soul is an experience not uncommon, but invariably the result of very unworldly processes.

Madeline felt in this way as she traveled North.

They stayed in Milan the first night.

She amused herself in the late afternoon, on the day of their arrival, in wandering through the new arcades opening off the square which the colossal statue of Leonardo da Vinci dominates. At twilight they went into the cathedral, a little further on. The bronze cross, on which the effigy of Christ hangs suspended from the great dome, had caught the last sunbeams falling through the blue and crimson glass of the clerestory, and shone in a wierd and impressive reflection that dotted the crown of thorns here and there with tips of somber light. Far down the nave, mellowed by the vast distance and the lofty height, resounded the thrilling strains sung by a band of choir boys who, headed by priests bearing lighted candles, were marching from a side chapel to the choir.

Madeline glanced down at Rosalia, who had knelt, and who often evinced a responsiveness and appreciation that lifted her to the dignity of a companion. The tears were rolling down her face. Her hands

were clasped. Her eyes were fixed in absorbed appeal on the bronze Christ so high above her and so far away.

The mistress stepped back, startled by the expression of agony and abandonment on the face that had often soothed her own unrest by its habitual passivity. Rosalia swayed back and forth as her lips moved in prayer. Evidently, she was undergoing a crisis of feeling.

The throng of wondering worshipers and sightseers had passed out or congregated near the high altar where a service was being conducted. Maid and mistress were quite alone.

"Madame," said Rosalia, looking sadly into Madeline's face as she rose. She leaned her face against the stony fluting of a pillar, and Madeline stood beside her, patiently and wonderingly, as the poor creature sobbed bitterly.

"It is so hard, Madame. You tink Rosalia good. De world call her bad; perhaps not de Christus up dere, but de world! O, Madame, de tings simple folks suffer because dey believe oders good when dey is great! Now I will tell you.

"I is not a French woman, Madame. I Swiss. I is a lace-maker. Two year ago, dis summer, I go wid my father to live in Heidelberg, where he work on de castle repairs, an' I make lace. It gay dere dat summer. Many strangers was dere, an' I tink to

make much money. We live in a leetle cottage, so small, like a bird's nest, tree rooms, but enough. My heart was so light dat it seem as if no sorrow could touch it. I sing all day long. Dere come a young gentleman to our cottage,—so beautiful, so good, I tought. He lof me. I did not tink. It was a new life, higher, brighter dan Rosalia had ever tought could be, an' I laugh an' be happy, an' go on all trough dat glad summer. An' believe him! O, Madame, I believe him when he say sometime he make a lady of Rosalia, and den marry her. Cannot you understand, dear Madame?

"Yes, Rosalia," said Madeline, soothingly.

"Den he offer to take me away from de cottage, cause my fader angry, so angry he would not speak to Rosalia. An' I so proud of my sin because of my great love. O, Madame, that de fader was as though he had never been! Den de Herr Carroll say he haf to go away when de summer gone, so far away, he say. I feel so bad. So he take me to Paris, an' find me rooms an' give me money, an' promise to come back in two months. I wait five months, an' never, never see him. Den I leave Paris, de heart breaking in my poor body, Madame, wid wishing. Tree month wid him made all de rest of life sad for Rosalia. De leetle child come before its time an' die; just live to die, Madame, an' den I haf nothing but my lonesome heart."

"Did he never write to you?"

"Yes, tree times. Each letter shorter and shorter. Den dat silence!"

"Where was his home?"

"I not sure. Sometime I tink in England, sometime I tink in America. He never tell me. He say he stonish me when he marry me, an' till den I must trust him. O, Madame, it is so bitter, so bitter here," and she pressed her heart, "dat I trust him. At first I fraid to trust again, even you, Madame.

"Madame, I haf to tell you. I could not pray, I could not hope for forgiveness till I tell somebody. An' I trust to you. Do not send me away."

"Rosalia, remember what our Lord said to the woman who was hunted by sinners like herself, 'go and sin no more.' How dare I say anything else?"

She took Rosalia's hand. It was a little hand, smaller than her own, and as she folded it between hers, and a smothered wail burst from her maid, her own heart cried out in sudden prayer as she thought of the multitude of forsaken and broken women all over the world, "How long, O Lord, how long must these things be?"

She was no weak sentimentalist. She lay awake a long time that night, pondering on Rosalia's story and wondering whether any material help could be procured for the girl. Suddenly she sat up in bed, a thought smiting her with dread. Rosalia had said

Mr. Carroll. Carroll was the name of Rebecca Saxby's son, and Carroll Saxby had left Heidelberg nearly two years ago.

This was an absurdity, an irritating coincidence. Had not Rebecca written to her repeatedly of Carroll's traveling companions, of their tributes to his manliness, of the commendatory letters from the university professors? An intrigue terminating in such weak cowardliness was altogether inconsistent with their reports. And yet—

She fell into a troubled sleep, with the persistent query coloring her dreams. When she awoke, the question returned with fresh force, and added to it was a feeling half a dream and half a desire, that they might encounter Carroll. This was not probable, however, as two days later would see them in Interlachen, where she proposed remaining till she started toward home, and Rebecca had written that Carroll's travels would take him through Russia, Norway and Sweden.

In the morning Rosalia was dressed in her Canton costume. Her wavy chestnut hair was braided and coiled flat against her head, covering the back from ear to ear. Her white bodice and elbow sleeves, the intricate silver chains, the short black skirt laid in innumerable plaits from waist to hem, the black stockings and silver buckled shoes transformed her, and gave a piquancy to her which revealed how pretty she might be if she had more vivacity.

"If Madame willing, Rosalia go back to what she was. She be a Swiss peasant once more."

"That is wise, Rosalia."

They reached Interlachen in the midst of one of those drenching showers that so often overtake the traveler in Switzerland, and which shut out the landscape as completely as if an ocean mist had suddenly settled down. They drove through the pretty town in a steaming stage, with nothing further to cheer them than the thud of the horses' feet through the mud and the rain beating on the wooden roof above their heads. But all at once the shower was over. The vivid grass and foliage glistened in resplendent freshness. Great puffs of cloud sailed up the mountain sides. In the midst of an aromatic fragrance, they dashed up a hill to a hotel standing at the foot of the Kleine Rugen.

After taking rooms overlooking the valley, Madeline sat down a few minutes to enjoy the panorama before her. In the narrow valley at her feet, and far enough away not to disturb her idyllic quietness, was the little town, shaped like an eyeglass with a long handle, the quaint old part with its square and church forming the socket, and the long street of the new part, lined with hotels, the handle. To her left lay Lake Brienz, and to her right Lake Thun, and, towering in front of her but behind the town, the abrupt, grim, and lowering heights of

the Thiergebirge. It was a vantage-ground from which she could watch every mood of nature, and drink in new and healing draughts of faith.

She had been questioning her possibilities in a solemn, incredulous way the past few days. She had been so long without ties, and yet there had come into her consciousness, all at once, a subtle, intangible susceptibility to a new influence that had made itself powerfully if briefly felt. She was too mature not to understand every step of the ground she was treading. She had had too heart-breaking a past to willingly descend from the colder regions of thought and duty. Would she not be very culpable to trust herself in the slightest to impulse—to intuition? And yet what were the intuitions of a woman of thirty-seven but conclusions accurately, if instantly, drawn from all her eyes had seen, her ears had heard, her mind had thought, her heart had felt, during the experiences of half an ordinary life-time? What was life, so much of it as she had lived, worth, its joy or its sorrow, if one could not judge of individuals without credentials which would be absolutely valueless in the affairs of everyday life?

Well, she would wait. Perhaps the possibility even of intimate acquaintance would dissolve into thin air like yonder cloud scaling the mountain side. But, with this fancy, came the vision of Mark Dascom as he looked when she lifted her eyes from the rose-

tree in Florence. He was a persistent force, demanding incorporation into her life. "Certainly he understands himself, but I—do I not understand myself also? I believe I will leave Interlachen shortly," she said, half aloud, as she rang for dinner. "It could be no child's play, and—I am afraid."

After a night's sleep her equanimity was restored, and this seemed, all things taken into consideration, the great essential of her life. This is a tame happiness to those whose innermost depths have not been profoundly and protractedly stirred, but its attainment and continuance are the bliss of the Quietist. To some it is but a transition which they never recognize while they are in it.

She simply did not think of Mark Dascom for days. She refused to do it. While an acquaintance merely suggests but does not yet fulfill deeper relations, this is possible. With the banishment of him from her thought, his coming seemed an event of weeks and perhaps months ahead.

So she gave herself up to long walks with Rosalia, climbing the steep sides of the Thiergebirge till the whole magnificent valley lay far below, wandering along the banks of the green and rushing Aar from lake to lake, studying the motley, forced growth on the conical, isolated Rugen, and occasionally going off two or three days at a time on some exciting but fatiguing expedition that enforced rest for a period just as long.

With her shawl spread out on some lofty, grassy plateau, the spicy winds whistling and rustling perpetually, a book only the pretext for rambling thoughts or a half-waking sleep in which every sense, however, was so at rest that even her dreams took no defined shape, she spent many an apparently idle morning, but gathered strength and brownness and a humanness that linked her more and more to ordinary people. The minutia of life began to interest her. Humanity ceased to be a mass and became individualized again. We are in a very sorry condition indeed, when the multitudinous varieties of men and women on each one of whom God has put some special stamp of his infiniteness, become one to our dulled faculties. We need to withdraw, even if it be into a desert, in order to come back to a right view of the highest of His creatures.

Weeks passed. August, with its shortening days and incessant showers and cooler nights, came. Still she lingered, for while she stayed in that mountain valley, the old life with its troubles seemed mythical. As soon as she turned her face to the West, a future under the conditions of her youth, but with years of experience that cut off all possibilities of its glamor, became a fact. Nevertheless, she would not wait much longer.

A day, phenomenally fair, in which the heavens hung so high and clear that it seemed as if even the

air must have been swept away, and following, as it did, a week of cold and rain and fog, chanced to be the one set for their departure.

"We cannot go to-day, Rosalia. To-morrow, surely! But we shall want this golden day to be the last in our memory of Interlachen.

"I think I will go down into the town to make a few purchases. I have no souvenirs of this pretty place. You shall go with me, and select something for yourself that you would like to take to America."

Rosalia had the fair complexion that becomes brown with exposure. But, notwithstanding she was dark, the old color flowed back and forth through her cheeks, the weeks of open air had deepened the violet hue of her large eyes, her teeth were as pretty, and yet the old play of happy expression was gone. Her bloom had been like that of one of the blossoms of her native Alpine heights, surpassingly fair while it lasted, but brief.

Madeline was far more content with her than if she had been like one of the beauties who sit making lace in front of the shops, their blonde locks uncovered, their pretty ankles crossed below their short skirts, their forget-me-not eyes lifted and lowered perpetually before the strangers who admire them one instant and pass them by the next.

Rosalia was patient, but she was unreconciled. Madeline felt a great pity for her. She had learned to love her. The mistress after a while realized that her maid's pain was like a tormented nerve, that dies, after a slow agony, because of its very wounds. Time, and God's mercy, and daily kindness would have to do for her what they could, gradually and in silence.

They were a characteristic pair as they left the hotel and descended a steep path inclosed in a bower of flowers and overhanging foliage. They walked in silence, each busy with her own thoughts. They came presently to a long stretch of meadow intersected by walks in every direction, but divided by a broad avenue skirted with fine lindens, beneath which seats were placed at intervals.

"We will sit down a few minutes," said Madeline.

Rosalia drew her knitting from her pocket, lowered the brim of her hat over her eyes a little, and pursued her work with habitual demureness and gravity. Madeline looked out over the quiet scene, so still at that hour that hardly a bird uttered a note, glanced forward to the walnut avenue that in the afternoon would be thronged with saunterers, then up at the line of near mountains on either side, that gave one the impression that this minute valley with its lofty boundaries was the world, and then, finally, reverently, to that majestic pinnacle in its

virgin whiteness that, through all the summer months, had shone in mystic splendor in its frame of blue and green, like a gigantic throne for God himself. The Jungfrau at all hours called forth her spontaneous adoration.

By and by the sound of approaching voices broke the stillness. Madeline glanced idly down the avenue, and saw, still in the distance, a man and woman coming toward them. She watched them as one will for want of something better to do, as they approached, and then with a mild interest, for the lady was extremely pretty and animated.

Her eyes suddenly dilated, for she recognized Carroll Saxby, although she had not seen him in several years. If he looked over at them, she would speak, but otherwise—well, there were years before her in which to speak to a great many—and yet, it would be only kind to Rebecca. The ugly query concerning Rosalia flashed into her mind. She glanced at her maid, who was still knitting. She felt an almost cowardly relief. Perhaps Rosalia would not look up.

But, while she was thinking thus, a gay, rollicking, uncontrollable laugh burst from him, over something his pretty companion had said.

The knitting dropped from Rosalia's fingers. She looked up; stood up; a pitiful whiteness about her lips, the eager, strained longing in her eye of some

homesick, pet dog that has lost its master. Her heavy little figure trembled with excitement.

Now they were opposite, but Carroll's head was bent over to hear something that his companion was saying; then another gay laugh rang through the air—they were past! He had not even looked at her!

She cast one mute, dumb look of stifled despair at Madeline.

"Poor lamb—poor lamb!" said Madeline. "Listen. I will send a messenger to the different hotels to find this man. He shall see you, Rosalia."

"No, oh, no, Madame! Of what use! I have seen *him*. He is not unhappy."

"Perhaps he is, Rosalia."

But she shook her head. "Rosalia has seen enough. No use; no use here!" She pressed her hand against her heart.

"Be strong, Rosalia. Forget him."

"I can't, Madame."

Madeline felt the utter powerlessness of philosophy in a case of this kind. Even religion was not the same solace that it could be to a heart that had many phases of human tenderness with which to liken divine love.

CHAPTER V.

ROSALIA.

On reaching her rooms Madeline dismissed Rosalia for the day. "She will have to weep it out, poor thing, for herself. I wish we had left this morning," were her thoughts, as she sat down to reflect on Rebecca.

What was her duty in a case like this? To separate Rosalia from herself was to add fresh grief to a heart already sorely stricken. It was impossible, on the other hand, to take her maid into Rebecca's home. She felt in a sad quandary. Then there was this other disagreeable question behind these. Had she any responsibility to Carroll?

She got up and went to Rosalia, whom she found about to go out again.

"I can't stay in, Madame Winchester. Perhaps de mountains will say a word of comfort to Rosalia. I must go out and get tired, Madame."

"Stay as long as you wish, Rosalia."

Early in the afternoon, Madeline went out also, to wander among the walks and woods of the Kleine Rugen. The hill possessed a peculiar charm for her.

She came at length on a granite bowlder jutting far over the valley below—so far below that the grass looked like a vast velvet cloth, beyond which the hills folded into one another as if in sympathetic nearness. No sound broke the air except the multitudinous but distant and dreamy tinkle of the cow bells. Over all loomed the Jungfrau, like an eternal altar.

She stepped to the verge of the precipice. Two eagles whirred from a tree close at hand, and cleft the blue depths higher and higher, till her dazzled sight could follow them no longer. It was a moment when she had an absolute, solemn conviction of the supremacy of mind and spirit. She clasped her hands in an involuntary prayer to have her thoughts, her aspirations and her life kept as unfettered as those eagles that soared aloft, because the air and altitude suited their common need.

She was a woman of commanding height and noble proportions, but, if she had been the smallest woman on the face of the earth with the frailest body with which such a woman could be endowed, she would have smiled in contempt at the fallacy that the

amount and force of matter in a human being, of the earth, earthy, should limit freedom of both action and thought.

She knew, and appreciated as a necessity, that much of the seclusion which had always environed women was the guard placed around them by good men to save them from bad ones. But, alas! how feudal it made civilization! As the vassals of the middle ages were warned to be within doors at their peril at nightfall, so women feared the darkness and the solitude because still for them "the times are very evil."

Would the time ever come when women, for the sake of the purity of unborn generations, could make laws proportionate to the bondage their physical weakness had been under, because the greatest of all possible crimes against humanity, socially organized, had been too lightly sentenced by men?

As she stood there in that pure air, like some prophet of old who had sought the mountains and the solitudes for clearer visions, a mass of womanish fears and sentimental queries which had disturbed her peace in plans for the future, disappeared forever.

Months before she had reached the conclusion that a woman may do what she can. Now she framed a second conclusion; that, given time and opportunity, women may do what they will.

She returned to the hotel with a triumphant sense of grace and enlargement. She had gained a new belief. A brighter light shone within her. She was a little larger, a little broader than she had ever been before. It had been a golden day to her, after all. It was Rosalia's sorrow that had given her enlargement. In how many ways it is true, she thought, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting, to-wit, for the redemption of the creature." Rosalia had helped her. Somewhere in the endless sequence of events must there not be help for Rosalia? "Alas!" thought Madeline, "the clearing up of one mystery only makes the myriads swarming behind it visible. There must indeed be an eternity."

When Rosalia left the hotel she wandered mechanically back to the spot where she had seen Carroll. It looked just the same, only so solitary. She went on.

Presently she came in front of one of the large hotels. A carriage drawn by four horses, as many people sitting inside, a pile of trunks strapped on behind, swept out of the drive and upon the broad avenue shaded by magnificent walnuts.

One of the men was Carroll Saxby, sitting with his back to the driver.

Rosalia leaned against the bole of one of the great trees and watched. Her fascinated gaze was agonized.

Carroll glanced along the promenade as the carriage rolled gently on; his eyes met hers. He looked conscience stricken and angry. As the distance increased between them, he turned his gaze away. In another minute he was out of sight.

A sick pain swept over her. She sat down and sat very still; that was all. She knew the meaning of that departing vehicle. He had gone—gone for good from Interlachen. Well, to-morrow she would be gone, too.

She got up and walked on again, and now all the pictures of those months with him in Heidelberg and Paris surged through her brain. She walked part of the time with her eyes shut. The sun felt hot; yet she shivered. By and by she came to the river. There was a fine bridge spanning it. She crossed half way, and then leaned on the parapet and looked over. How the water rushed under the bridge—milky green, and curling and rippling, but making so little noise. It must be very deep and very cold, she thought, and she shivered again and went on. Where could she go? What could she do to stop the sinking misery that drove her forward and made her weak at the same time?

There was a narrow path threading the opposite side of the stream, and it looked white and warm in the sunshine unbroken by the shade of a single tree. She would go there and get warm. There were

women in the meadow beyond the path, raking the scant cutting of grass. They were women of her own kind. How glad she would be to be in the field raking hay if her heart were light!

She reached the path. How good the sunshine felt. It was a straight path, and even, and after a while she shut her aching lids again and conjured up the face she loved, going on and on, further and further away. Her steps wavered with the faintness that sickened her. But she could think better, see better, if she walked. If she stopped, she could not think at all.

Presently she stepped into the grass on one side; then she started into the path again; a half dozen steps would take her to the middle. She thought she saw the path, but her eyes were closed still. O, that face that she had kissed—had caressed with her hands! On she walked, still nearer and nearer the water's edge. Then, all at once, her wavering feet stepped off the path, the swift Aar curled over and around her. Her clutching hand could gain no hold of the walled bank. The hard, smooth stones cut it, that was all, as she sank and drifted on. The agony of that interminable summer day grew less and less. Her tired little brain stopped thinking. Her fancy left its cruel roamings.

On she drifted, a black and white mass on the smooth, rushing water. So many people near, and

yet no one to see her. The women were bent over their rakes. The gay world was on the other side of the river, out of sight and sound of its waters. By and by her skirts caught on the wires of a duck weir, a half mile from the spot where she had fallen in. There, an hour later, they found her, the water rocking her back and forth and up and down.

The brilliant afternoon, so cool and exhilarating on the Kleine Rugen, so hot and depressing along the Aar, came to an end. The sun went down in a blaze of golden light, flaming up in white and red-tipped clouds behind the mountains.

Madeline sat on the terrace overlooking Lake Thun, loth to go inside. She felt at peace. Life was once more a boon. It was luxury to walk up and down the commanding terrace, breathing the sweet air, watching the last glimmer of daylight on the distant water.

She thought of Mark Dascom. He had not come, after all. Something had detained him, she was sure. Their acquaintance was not one for letters. Was she glad that he had not come? Neither glad nor sorry, and yet she was as conscious of the meaning of this quiescent mood as the fire-worshiper is of the living, breathing glow that creeps up and down the pores of a stick of wood—not fire until it bursts forth, but a vital light bound sooner or later to become leaping, triumphant fire. She knew that

this change had to come to her if she met him many times. Perhaps it did not belong to her future, though, to meet him. He thought it did. Well, he might be mistaken.

The light faded almost entirely. The illuminated hotel looked cheery. The sound of the stage with the evening passengers became audible.

She stood off at one side watching the passengers alight. One after another descended. Finally a tall man, bending as he walked the length of the low-roofed vehicle, got out, drew himself up, looked around for a second, and, instead of entering like the others, waved the porter inside with his hand luggage, and advanced toward Madeline.

She had a momentary feeling of dismay. Then she stepped forward a little way, held out her hand and said:

"Welcome to the Yungfrau, Mr. Dascom."

"I caught her friendly glance as we came through the valley. I am more delighted to receive yours, however. What a charming spot this is!"

They walked toward the park together.

"Have you been here all summer?"

"Yes; but I leave to-morrow!"

"To-morrow!"

"Yes; I had expected to go this morning, but waited a day over. So to-morrow I must be off."

He looked at her with an odd expression for a second. "I am sorry you are going so soon," he said simply. Then he turned toward the office while she went to the reading-room.

Later, when they were seated at a little table in a secluded corner, he said:

"I must tell you something strange. I went to Thun this morning by appointment, but found a telegram in place of my friend. So I came here to-day instead of to-morrow."

"Is your friend to meet you here?"

"He is not to meet me at all, now. I came here to see you, as I said I would."

"Did you fully expect to meet me here so late in the season "

"As I came at the very first moment I could, I did. You think this is a superstition, I suppose."

"Nothing so grave as that—a fancy.

"Well, we won't discuss it, since I have met you,—and here."

"You are not a clairvoyant, I hope?"

"Nothing of the kind. And I have never seen a ghost or dreamed a true dream. Yet I so fully expected to meet you in Interlachen, that I looked for you from the moment I entered the town,—and found you. The actuality is sufficient. Don't let us try to explain it."

She would have liked to say, "Your mind is so full of me, that you looked for me everywhere, where there was the vaguest possible chance of seeing me." But as that would be admitting more than she cared to do, she sat still.

Their conversation kept on common-place levels, by her intention and effort, and he found her charming in the ease with which she sustained both sides whenever he made a resolute effort to be more personal.

A common-place woman is as fascinating under certain circumstances as one who lives on the heights is under others, and a woman who is many sided possesses the charm of the unexpected which is as perpetual a refreshment to adults as to children.

An orchestra was playing in the public grounds down in the valley. The sound ascended dreamily on the still air, as they went out on the terrace and paced up and down in the white moonlight.

"Which way do you go to-morrow, Mrs. Winchester?"

"By way of Geneva, to Paris."

"When do you sail?"

"I do not quite know."

"In October?"

"Perhaps; perhaps a little later."

"I suppose you will go by way of Liverpool?"

"I am entirely undecided, Mr. Dascom. I have Rosalia still, whom I presume I shall take with me, and—by the way, I wonder where she is. I have not seen her since early this afternoon. The poor thing was made very unhappy this morning and I dismissed her for the day. But she ought to have presented herself by this time." She looked inadvertently toward the hotel. As she did so, she saw the proprietor come to the wide doorway, gaze anxiously up and down, and then start toward her.

They went to meet him.

"Ah, Mees Winchester. It is one thousand peeties, but your maid—de leetle Swiss—"

"Rosalia? What has happened?" She laid her hand on Mark's arm involuntarily.

"Her is drownded—drownded in de Aar. Dey have carried her to de convent. Perhaps it is not her!" and the proprietor clasped his hands and smiled a little consolingly as he saw Madeline's agitation. "It may be all one sad mistake, Madame."

But Madeline shook her head. "Will you have a carriage called for me, immediately?"

"*Certainement*, Madame." The kind German waited for further orders.

"That is all." She stood motionless an instant as the man turned away. There was a tremulous, white look about her lips, as she said to Mark, "Will you go with me?"

He never forgot her quick, gliding motion or her pathetic, anxious face as she hastened to the hotel and disappeared up the stairs. She came down, presently, saying softly, with a kind of frightened dismay:

"She is not upstairs, I know it is my poor Rosalia."

The night was chilly. She had wrapped a thick white shawl about her shoulders, and this, with her white dress and the white wrap thrown over her head, made her look almost angelic. Her colorless face and great, starry eyes, the shiver which ran through her whole frame as Mark assisted her into the carriage and took his place beside her, were pitiful. He would have given worlds to breathe some tender, comforting, endearing word.

The night was very still. Two or three times the dew from over-hanging branches fell on their faces. Suddenly Madeline uttered a shivering little sob, and then drew herself up forcibly.

"Why don't you cry, Mrs. Winchester?" said Mark gently.

"O, it will do no good!" but she covered her face with her hands and the hot tears fell through her fingers. "It is a cruel world—cruel to poverty and ignorance. Poor Rosalia!"

She sobbed anew as she thought of the sturdy little figure and the helpless passion in the round face, of

the needless misery and shame, and wanton selfishness that had ruined the simple life, and for a second including all men in her condemnation, she withdrew further into her corner of the wide seat.

Mark understood in a flash the whole story and her thoughts. He involuntarily lifted his eyes; through the gloom, rose the majestic white-robed mountain.

"She is as inaccessible as yonder Jungfrau," he said to himself in dismay. Suddenly, by some strange, subtle, electric inflow of irrepressible tenderness, he leaned over, and, putting his arm behind her, said:

"Trust me!"

She turned to him abruptly, the moon-light clearly showing her troubled face. "So many men are untrue to the most sacred rights of women. Poor Rosalia!"

"God forgive him who wrought her misery," said Mark, fervently; "for such sin I cannot forgive!"

She gazed into his face with an appealing, clinging questioning, as if she would fathom the depths of his whole life.

The moon was riding above the mountains, and the white light revealed his clear, honest, solemn eyes, his tender, reverent, insistent gaze.

She held out her hand, and he took it, her fingers closing around his for a second. She had given him

her confidence. Withdrawing her hand she sat back, and became lost in thought.

They did not talk any further till they reached the convent. It was a rambling, sorry building surrounded by a large garden shut in with grim, cement walls.

A sister admitted them, her dingy black and her aged face harmonizing with the staid, bare room into which she ushered them. Presently another nun entered and, announcing herself as Sister Antonio, asked if they had come to see the drowned woman.

"Yes," said Madeline, rising, and trembling perceptibly. The vaguest hope excited her that, perhaps, after all, it was not Rosalia.

"Take my arm, Mrs. Winchester."

She accepted Mark's proffer. They followed Sister Antonio down a long, grim, desolate passage, through a low-ceiled, dimly lighted refectory, into what appeared to be a kind of kitchen office.

Sister Antonio left them there a few minutes; finally a third nun appeared, who led them through another series of rooms to a small chamber. A board, covered with a sheet, underneath a window through which the cool air was blowing, told them that at last they were in the presence of the dead.

A half dozen men and women were sitting vacant-eyed and still around the room.

Madeline shuddered as she stood beside that covered form.

She lifted the sheet. Yes, there was Rosalia! There was the round face, so pallid now. There were the blue eyes, without sight or longing, half open, their very lifelessness more terrible than the most passionate regret. There was the chestnut hair clustering in many ringlets around the childish forehead. There were the little hands, sun-burned but shapely.

"Poor child! Poor Rosalia!" She sank down on the stone floor, laying her face upon the cold bosom, and wept.

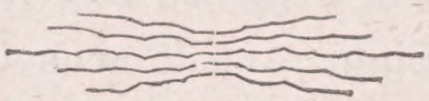
Something hard rested against her cheek. She saw a loop of gold chain barely visible above the white waist, as she half-lifted her head. She drew out the chain; a locket was attached to it. She opened it, while still kneeling. Inside was Carroll Saxby's picture.

She saw at a glance the irresolution of the beautiful face. "Ah, there lies the fatal defect!" she thought, as she unclasped the locket and put it in her pocket. It was not a bad face; only a weak, lovable one. But the consequences to Rosalia had been worse, doubtless, than they would have been had it been essentially vicious and weak.

The thought of the lookers-on recalled her to herself. She rose, brushing the tears away, and passed outside alone with Sister Antonio. Having heard

all there was to tell, which was sadly meager, she gave the necessary directions, briefly but with a loving attention to details that filled the nun's repressed but affectionate nature with wondering admiration.

She cried gently, all the way back to her hotel.



CHAPTER VI.

AN UNDERSTANDING.

They laid Rosalia in a churchyard encircling a grim old structure, as if with its rank grass and matted ivy it would redeem the barrenness and gloom of the exterior. But the grass and ivy and flowering plants could avail little, when, in every direction there rose above the graves slender black crosses with staring brass medallions which read with uniform monotony, "Here rests in God—"

The grave was made under the shadow of a monument held against the church by grappling irons, as if the dead outside would fain encroach on the living within. On the summit of the stately memorial was a crown and below this a shield, while leaning out from one side was a skeleton of Death, whose grinning jaws and eyeless sockets seemed to take in at once the tomb it guarded and the humble, nameless mound that covered Rosalia.

Mark had remained with Madeline during the two days that had elapsed, and now, after the burial, was alone with her in this quaint God's acre.

He had attended to so many matters for her, quietly and efficiently, and, while constantly at her side, had not in any way obtruded upon her attention.

She felt his care, his kindness, and his silence, deeply, for, in losing Rosalia, she had lost a faithful friend. She looked at him occasionally with unspoken thankfulness.

How could he help regarding Rosalia's translation as his golden opportunity? While she lingered among those lonely graves with that feeling we all have that the dead are as desolate as their resting-places, thinking lovingly of the many unrequired attentions the little Swiss had shown her, and committing unconsciously, anew, to the mercies of a tender God, Rosalia's frailties, sorrow, and repentance, Mark saw the brightness of the summer day, and the peace of a future that seemed more possible than ever. Like all mature people who have learned patience with years, he felt that time, more or less, mattered little. Madeline's faith in him would awaken her love.

"Come away now, Mrs. Winchester. Rosalia is not here. If you take that long journey to-morrow, you will need to harbor your strength. You are very pale."

"I do not feel tired. I have such a thirsty craving for this fresh air. I will walk back. Activity is my solace for nearly every sorrow."

"That is a man's comfort, too. How did you find it out?"

"Most women with a nervous organization have to find it out in sheer self-defense. I have been years in schooling myself to the immediate exercise of it, as soon as I feel the need."

"You mean to say, then, that you do not particularly care to walk back, but that you think it the proper thing to do."

"About that, yes."

"Suppose, instead, you step into this victoria, and let me go with you for a drive along the lake. The drive will give you the fresh air, too."

"I think yours is a better plan," she said, smiling, as she stepped into the low carriage.

It seemed the most natural thing in the world that they two should be alone together, side by side, as only two persons can feel alone in a strange land. The sense of both the isolation and companionship was pleasant to Madeline, as they bowled through the town and out upon the gentle ascent leading to the shore of Lake Brienz. The afternoon boat was puffing down the lake. From time to time they passed parties of travelers who had come over the Brunig pass. But, during the greater part of their ride, they were as secluded as if this paradise had been made for them, for often there was little else

to indicate the nearness of the work of man except the magnificent roadway following closely the curve of the lake.

"Mrs. Winchester," said Mark, after much genera conversation which had kept them both at ease, "I want to ask a great favor of you."

She looked up a little incisively. There was neither sentiment nor fear in his face.

"Well?" she said gently.

"I expect to go from here to London, where I shall remain several weeks. Will you do me the kindness to write to me there, telling me on what steamer you sail, as soon as your decision is made?"

She sat still. Was he getting tired of letting their acquaintance progress at the easy intervals that had hitherto marked it? She was perfectly willing, so far as the mere journey was concerned, to sail at the same time with him, but, it might make a difference if he were going to remain in New York.

"Do you expect to pass the winter on the other side?" she asked.

"Yes."

"At your sister's?"

"Near my sister's. Naturally, I want to see much of her and Blanche, my neice."

Madeline drew into herself perceptibly. It made no difference whether Mrs. Allerton crossed her path, except as that lady did so through Mark. That she

would do this was certain, if they were all in New York. This dread of social friction was a cowardly thing. She had no mean fear of Mrs. Allerton's anger or superciliousness, only she wished to avoid the consciousness of them as facts.

Mark was more than willing to have the whole matter settled either for or against himself in the presence of the social world that has, it is true, done Madeline no other wrong than simply to forget her — a small wrong on the surface, until we remember that social ostracism to a woman is as bad as expatriation to a man. His pride in her and love for her made this feeling a matter of course. This was his simple thought, clear as crystal to himself. He believed that Madeline must understand that even her friendship meant more to him than the love of any other woman.

She understood nothing of the kind. She believed that he felt aggravatingly sure of his ground with her, and would accept the conditions of her life as disagreeable though inevitable facts. When a man is either a lover or a husband, she thought, a woman's life takes on a multitude of merely social relations which she can either accept or reject as she chooses, if a widow or single. As Mark Dascom's wife, her old society life would have, to some extent, to be renewed. It would be time enough when and if she married him, to come face to face with people

whom she would otherwise be glad to forget to all intents and purposes. If she did not marry him, an intimate acquaintance with him made a disagreeable combination of circumstances for him also. She sat still so long that he finally said, almost appealingly:

"Have you forgotten to answer me?"

She glanced at him with troubled indecision. "I am considering your comfort, Mr. Dascom."

"My comfort!" he exclaimed in amazement. "You do not need to consider me!" The very thought of her consideration, however, made him linger over the words.

"Your social comfort. You would know me so well by the time we had crossed together, that we should inevitably be warm friends or enemies. Now, if we were friends, as *my* friend, you would constantly come in contact with people who would wonder at your taste. Socially, the misfortune of my past life will amount with many to a crime. I am so tired of these infinitesimally small considerations, that for myself, the old life which you, however, must consider, has no charms. With me as your friend, you would be in open warfare with half your relatives, certainly with Mrs. Allerton, and I am thinking that it is not worth your while."

Mark looked at her in dumb astonishment. What difference did it make to him if all New York rose up in judgment. He knew what he wanted. A man

who lives in many places finds it impossible to be bound even in thought to the utilitarian proprieties of any one. For a man like himself to love a woman like Madeline was to have such a supreme sense of her goodness and beauty and fitness for the best in life, that it was inconceivable to him that her pride should be even vaguely touched with the considerations she had mentioned.

"Mrs. Winchester," he said, finally, turning around in the carriage, and looking at her in surprise and reproof, "so far as I am concerned we are friends, and have been friends for many months. I have such a sense of being honored by your mere acquaintance and such profound respect for you as a woman, and such assurance of the value that your friendship would be to me, that I simply cannot understand how you can lay such stress on extraneous matters. What you have said, moreover, is an assumption of motives and thoughts which I could never entertain. I thought you would take for granted my absolute pride in our acquaintance."

A hot flush of shame sent the blood back to her heart. A blinding, sudden consciousness smote her that she loved this man—loved him supremely, or she could never have suffered for him in anticipation, as she had years ago ceased to suffer for herself. He was right, and she was wrong. She had committed an unnecessary and an intrinsically ignoble act of

self abnegation. For her, Madeline Winchester, who believed she had risen superior to all mere prejudice, to set the judgment of the fickle, volatile world before anyone whom she might take into the sanctity of friendship or love! His words swept her morbid and unworthy illusions away forever.

"I was placing you before a lower tribunal than I would be willing to be judged by. We will appear only before the supreme court of each other's good opinion henceforth. I will send you word of the steamer."

Her eyes were shining and conciliatory, her lips were trembling with the emotion she was trying to conceal.

Mark smiled and bowed in reply. An expression so kind, so gentle, and so noble suffused his face, such a serene contentment animated his manner, that she insensibly partook of it.

They drove on in silence. The sun sank below the nearer mountains. The steep banks of the lake kept them in deep shade and coolness.

When they entered Interlachen the lamps were lighted, a few stars sprinkled the sky, and a coldness pervading the air told that autumn was near.

Although she was outwardly so entirely alone, Madeline felt neither loneliness nor homelessness, as she finished her preparations for departure at a late hour that evening.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM LIVERPOOL TO NEW YORK.

When Madeline reached Paris, the brightness and gaiety of the city, instead of irritating, delighted her The movement of the streets, the brilliancy of the windows, and the long walks she took morning and afternoon, so beguiled her time and attention that she stayed on indefinitely. Life was sweet. Living in Paris was so bright and soft and comfortable that September glided into October before she left for London.

There, sooner or later, she would meet Mark, or at least hear from him. During the six weeks since she had seen him, her thoughts had rested on him and in him with great gladness and confidence. The delight of absolute trust once more in the good purposes and character of a friend, when a man or woman has been for a long time friendless and proudly and utterly self reliant, is a blessed experience. She found

that she could drive away the shadows of the past whenever they threatened to gather by the thought of Mark.

So it happened that, though she walked and drove alone, and was hours out-of-doors or in crowds, that nevertheless she walked with him and drove with him and never felt lonely, and would have found any other companion an intruder.

When she took the train for London, she felt as if she were going to him, and yet she had no intention of seeing him, unless they chanced to meet, till it was time to sail. Impatience and the hurrying of events had passed out of her life. She had paid a bitter penalty for this intense inner quietness, but that strange compensation which comes to all naturally buoyant and self-poised natures, when they are lovingly intent upon the higher issues of living, left her not sorry that her pathway had been exactly the one she had trodden.

There was no maidenly timidity in her affection for Mark Dascom. There need be no flutter of uncertain suspense about his feeling. That had been declared from the beginning, and it belonged to his singular dignity and transparency combined to make such a tacit avowal natural and becoming. As to awkwardness with herself in this transition, that also was impossible. She had passed beyond the stage of awkwardness, even in love. We have to experience

many deep secrets of maturity before we can even have the proper wisdom to be childlike. She knew that she would accept him as naturally as he would give verbal expression to his love when the time came. And this late blossoming of a new life and purpose was no untimely growth, but a second fruitage due to rich soil and favorable conditions. It was not necessarily less sweet or marvelous in its transforming power because there had been a spring-time. An occasional late bloom only serves to point the richness of a season in which bloom is universal.

In London, the weeks passed much as they had in Paris. Only the fogs shut down over the great city; the massive buildings with their streaks of velvet-black soot in all the cracks and crevices loomed funereally through the grayness and dampness when there were light and rifts enough through the fog to make even a short distance visible. Neither the fog nor the dampness depressed her. The rains had no more deterring influence over her than over an English woman. Morning and afternoon she was out. The cool autumn days, if they gave no color to her cheeks, rounded them a little and quickened her elastic step.

It was November before she could decide on her sailing. A letter from Rebecca, urging an immediate return and insisting that Madeline should spend the winter with her, hastened the decision.

She laid Rebecca's letter down, after thinking a few minutes, and, putting on her bonnet and cloak, went to the steamship office. She selected her state-room for the third Saturday in the month. On reaching home, she wrote to Mark. There were three weeks still. Should she see him in the interval? No, it was better to lead her free life—alone, yet not alone—till they met in Liverpool, and then—then the tide should take its course. She would oppose no barrier of either reticence or withdrawal.

She wrote to him, accordingly, that she would sail on the 2—, and that it would be convenient for her not to see him again till they met on the steamer.

That journey to Liverpool! Could she ever forget it? And yet what was there to tell about it? The whole outside world was enveloped in a bright mist through which the sun tried time and again to penetrate without success. The whole inside world represented an empty drawing-room coach, with herself for the sole occupant. It had been a long time since she had traveled in anything but the small English carriages, and, if comfortable, they had seemed sadly cramped to her, with her American love of space. This concession that the Midland railway made to her countrymen's habits already seemed like a bit of home—a home that stretched for her from sea to sea. She fancied what it would be to travel once more for hundreds of miles through unfenced,

unhedged, uncultivated country, and felt a healthy, homesick longing for her native land of endless possibilities and future developments.

No one, to have looked at her, would have dreamed of the wide world of thought, of retrospection and introspection through which she was traveling with as much rapidity as that swift express was carrying her northward. She lay back in her chair most of the time, with her eyes closed. The casual observer would merely have noticed a highly-bred, distinguished looking woman, whose dignity and sweetness would have claimed, if needed, the gracious offer of assistance. From the tip of the carefully shod foot just peeping from under her dress, as it rested on the ottoman, to the small black bonnet fitting closely about her face and emphasizing with its black strings her slender white chin, she was the full embodiment of that most characteristic of all beautiful women, a finely formed and bred and perfectly dressed American lady.

The hours and the miles glided away together. Finally, she fell into a sweet and dreamless sleep, from which she was aroused by the guard saying, "You are in Liverpool, ma'am."

The delay with her luggage was short, and in a few minutes she was rattling down the steep streets of the sea-port to her steamer, with that freshness of feeling and strength which follow a dreamless nap

taken unawares. The fog, which had partially lifted in the Midland country, hung to the very earth in Liverpool, trailing, floating swathes of mist which an occasional gust of wind waved back and forth like a curtain.

The tall, black side of the gigantic steamer loomed like a wall of protection, as the tug halted beside it. Once fairly on board, she glanced around, surprised that Mark was not on hand to meet her, as he was not on the tug. He was nowhere to be seen.

After assuring herself that her trunks were on, she went down to her state-room to dispose of her little belongings.

Then she walked through the saloons, expectant now and eager to come upon her *compagnon de voyage*. Arrangements, doubtless, with some one or other of the officers had detained him about the ship; she wandered hither and thither, expecting to meet him at every turn.

There were few passengers, according to the list, and fewer still visible.

Finally she went up to the deck on the land side, and took her place by the railing to watch the occasional stray passengers who might come at the last minute. Not a doubt had yet disturbed her but that Mark would come. The first bell rang while she stood there. A half hour more still. It was rather pleasant, on the whole, this constant expecta-

tion of a certain pleasure, and she enjoyed it as she had the rest of the day, in a quiet, dreamy manner, but with an intense watchfulness and longing that made her unmindful of the clouds of fog swirling over the deck and packing the fur on her dolman. The mist rested in drops on her hair and moistened her face. She was only aware that it was refreshing. No chill could cool the glow of her high vitality. She started out of her absorption as the harsh clang of the second bell sounded. Surely he must appear now, and her heart gave its first flutter of foreboding. Were they moving? Yes.

She went back to her state-room, and, burying her face in her hands, wept gently, with a feeling of profound loneliness.

Composing herself presently she went up again.

They were moving slowly down the Mersey. The fog shut them in like a veil. She paced up and down the deck. The movement of the steamer was so smooth that she could hardly feel it. She went to the side, after a few minutes, and looked down. The level of the water was scarcely disturbed. Were they stopping? While she was wondering the blatant puff of a tug broke the stillness. Soon she saw the steam mingling with the fog. A stubby prow cut through the gloom, and in another minute the tug was alongside, and there was Mark, looking straight up into her eager, searching face which told her

whole story. It was worth being left a score of times to see the sudden dilation of those starry eyes, to catch the momentary quiver of that proud mouth, and to be watched for by the woman whom he had gazed at from afar for nearly two years, with a worshipful, never-ceasing regard.

When he came to where she waited for him, he took the hand which she extended and held it for an instant in a close grasp, and looked at her with a long sigh of relief.

"I expected to be here to see you aboard," he said, gazing into her uplifted face as if he half expected she would vanish. "I came from Edinburg. We had a detention, and until an hour ago, I gave up reaching the steamer short of Queenstown. I hope you got aboard without any difficulty?"

"O, yes; and in ample time. So I have been watching for you for an hour."

He flushed slightly. The sweetest words he had ever heard in his life she had just spoken. He glanced down at her momentarily, then at her wet cloak, and, noticing her damp hair, said, with manifest tenderness in his voice, "Have you been—outside—an hour?"

"That is nothing. But, now that you are here, we might as well go inside."

"Shall you leave me?" There was a pang of disappointment in the manly voice which touched her,

and, glancing at him with the greatest gentleness and yet openness, she said, "I expect to depend altogether on your society."

As they stepped over the doorway she paused, a trifle irresolutely. It was not according to the grain of her nature to lead—but she felt like a hostess to Mark in this first hour that they were so alone together.

"Don't you think this would be a nice place to sit? It is free from smells, and we shall get the air, and there is just enough coming and going to make it cheerful. If you will find my chair, I will meet you here in an hour."

The place she had selected was really a passage-way from one deck to another, but it was inclosed, and had space enough for a couple of sofas and a few chairs. There was little motion, and a constant current of air. They were both experienced sailors enough to know the preventive value of such a location.

When she came back at the appointed time, the stewards following with pillows and rugs, Mark was there, and looked taller and handsomer than ever in a sealed-lined coat and high seal cap.

They selected their places and sat down with that leisurely adjustment and the occasional remarks which the sense of days of unbounded opportunity for each other's society gave. After they had made

themselves comfortable and had looked over the passenger list, each with a secret feeling of relief that the names represented unknown persons, they glided into a desultory and prolonged conversation such as they had had but once before—in Florence, six months ago.

Six interminable months to Mark in passing, now a dream of almost utter blankness, and all the better for that, since she had been so little in them.

With Madeline there was a tentative enjoyment of this new relation and position which did not in any way impair their value. Perfect confidence in a person does not imply a desire of expectation of perfect unity. Confidence, trust, was the pivot on which her love had finally turned; trust in uprightness and definiteness of manly purpose. But she, like most women, had more than once found out that uprightness and manliness may accompany great unresponsiveness and an inborn lack of a thousand delicate intuitions not absolutely necessary to existence, but increasing its attractiveness and the expression of tenderness to an almost infinite extent. She did not believe for a moment that Mark was this kind of a man, or it would have been a foregone conclusion that she could not have loved him. Moreover, she had had sufficient proof to the contrary. However, she wanted time to learn the depth of this quality in his nature, and if it were constant, but not deep, she could avoid disappointment for the future. She

would lean only just so far as there was this strength of delicate tenderness to lean on; then he would suppose himself equal to her deepest needs, and she would be only half conscious of them, if she never sought or expected an impossible satisfaction.

Was such casuistry impossible to true love? Nay, the intense lover is a profound casuist.

Such a standard to a young person would perhaps preclude love. But, with the mature, love is a matter of many-sided selection. It includes an acute perception of the clearly defined limits inevitable to every personality, and a deliberate effort and longing never to infringe upon such limitations in the beloved, after they are once known, and at the same time a thorough enjoyment of qualities, traits and attractions which are stronger than prudence, or otherwise there would never be second attachments.

With Mark it was somewhat different. Madeline was his first love, and into his affection he threw an abandonment which crept through the reserve of his speech and manner in numberless ways. She satisfied his ideal of a woman, and to him there was no future.

But to them both, it is needless to say, the present was sufficiently delightful, or they would not have been situated exactly as they were.

All that afternoon the mists enveloped them and the steamer made slow progress. But the next morning the sun rose from an unclouded sky. There was little wind. When Madeline came up stairs, cloaked and hooded for a walk, Mark was waiting for her.

Their steamer had a long, wide deck, almost deserted at this early hour.

She took his arm. Up and down they paced, in the salt, crisp, sunny air, with a growing elation and freedom.

The Irish coast with its treeless outline, now purple and cold in the winter morning light, lay at their right. An occasional gull followed in their wake, rhythmically beating the air with its long, white wings. The cordage creaked and sighed in the wind. The great waves surged in their wake in joyous foam. Over them, till it met the dark blue water, arched the pale blue of the sky, soft, but cold with the neutral tints of a high latitude.

That sky made Madeline think of Canada, and then across all the summers and winters of the intervening years came the faces of her children. Once more she heard the patter of their feet close beside her, and for an instant, in which she lived an hour of heart-ache, she was thousands of miles away and on a Sound steamer, fleeing with her little ones from the scene of their desolation.

Mark felt the sudden silence of her whole being. He noticed the slow tightening of her hand on his arm. He looked down. Her eyes were far away—solemn, loving, unutterably sad.

His gaze called her back. She glanced up, smiled with a half-sigh in which she appeared to bury the grief which had come to the surface, and then, after a second's hesitation, said simply, "I was thinking of my children. I have two little ones whom I laid to sleep in Canada. They were drowned in one of the high tides of the Bay of Fundy."

He took the hand resting on his arm and folded it in his own.

They paced up and down the solitary deck once or twice in silence. Then she said, without withdrawing her hand, "I would like to tell you the story of their brief lives."

This she did, with an artless pathos and tenderness that allied her anew in his memory with the ineffably benign if despairing motherhood in Murillo's Madonna.

When she had finished, lifting her hand reverently to his lips, he said, "Thank you."

Pretty soon a bevy of young girls came on deck, fresh as roses and charming to look at in their fluffy, white hoods. They had already built a whole volume of romance about Mark and Madeline, the successive chapters of which had been destroyed as soon as composed.

"Here, girls, here they are!" whispered one, excitedly, the wind taking the words far down the deck. "She is perfectly lovely! Such divine eyes! She's his sister! I've made up my mind to that!"

Mark glanced at Madeline, and they both laughed softly, and then, presently turning round, ran the gauntlet of the bright eyes that gazed with inviting admiration one second, and looked off over the sea the next with a high unconsciousness.

When they came opposite, Madeline smiled and bowed, and Mark tipped his hat. From that minute they had five acolytes at their shrine from whose near or distant adoration it was almost impossible to escape. But on the whole, it made a piquant digression, and sometimes, during the long afternoons, he told them tales of India and Siberian stories of conscripts while the girls sat around Madeline, holding her hands or nestling against her lap as they half reclined on their rugs.

Thus the days glided away. They were more than half over. Six days out. Not a drop of rain, not a gale. The log registering three hundred and seventy miles each noon.

Madeline and Mark were more than content to sail on and on indefinitely. The five radiant girls declared that they wished that the voyage would last a month.

"Only two more days to see you, dear Mrs. Winchester," exclaimed one, tragically. Then there was a universal moaning and lamenting.

She found this excess of spirits and enthusiasm attractive. Mark, if truth be told, was desperately tired of their effusiveness and omnipresence, and although, thanks to them, he had seen many a sweet side to Madeline, still he would have been more than willing to take these revelations on trust. Positively there had not been two consecutive hours when their reading or their conversation had not been disturbed by these ubiquitous girls. In the midst of one of their carnivals of chatter, he excused himself and went out on deck.

"He's grand—perfectly grand, Mrs. Winchester," said one of the fair satellites pensively, as Mark disappeared. "He makes me think—makes me think of Michael Angelo's Moses in Saint Peter in Chains."

"Horns and all, Rose? Bah!"

"No, Pussy; but his strength! His proportions! I adore a large man."

At this juncture, Mark stepped inside again.

"The fair weather is at an end." He held the door ajar. "Hear that!"

A mournful, hollow, reverberating moan wailed through the cordage.

"When the wind sounds like that, look out for a gale. You will all be ill before to-morrow, young ladies."

"I should think you would be glad, Mr. Dascom, if we were. We have been sad torments, now have we not?" asked Pussy.

He looked a little quizzical and said good-naturedly that they had better improve present opportunities. Thereupon he began a sea yarn which they all pronounced the most thrilling story he had told yet.

While he talked the wind increased. The stewards hurried back and forth through their snug quarters. A blast closed the door warningly. But six days of even ordinary sailing is a good preparation for rough weather. When the long sinking of the steamer into the deep hollows became more and more apparent, and when, suddenly, the bow cut through a gigantic wave which came tumbling over the deck with a roar like thunder, the girls only cried, "Delightful!" and begged Mark for another story.

When he had finished, Rose thanked him a little feebly, and presently, rising, and looking suspiciously pale, made her sister go down stairs with her.

Mark indulged in a wicked, eager hope concerning the remaining three and could have blessed Pussy, who, a half hour later, signified her intention of going to bed in order to prevent disastrous conse-

quences. Thereupon the other two voted it a splendid idea, and all three, after kissing Madeline several times over, simultaneously disappeared.

The afternoon was closing somberly enough. The gale blew with steady force. The rain drove against the ports, washing them with an incessant blinding deluge. Ever and anon, a big sea flooded the decks from stem to stern, and the vessel shivered a second and then plunged bravely forward.

"It is pretty rough," said Mark, though reassuringly, to Madeline, who sat in a corner of one of the sofas, numerous pillows tucked behind her back. "This is no more than could be expected, and if it gets no worse, there is nothing to fear."

"I am never afraid at sea," she said. "Such a commotion of the elements always calms and elates me at the same time."

"You do not feel ill?"

"On the contrary, I never felt better."

He was highly gratified. "Suppose I order our dinner up here. It will be a delightful change. We are more comfortable here than we could be down stairs."

She assented.

Certainly nothing could have been cosier, under the circumstances, than the really dainty meal he succeeded in securing an hour later. Outside was the mingled roar of wind and water. Inside were the

warmth and bright electric lights. The big tray with all their dinner served on it at once, and Mark beside her, doing the honors in a homely, genial way, made it seem as if they really might be boy and girl together, instead of man and woman drawing nearer and nearer, a mutual admission which only awaited opportunity.

When they had finished their dinner, which terminated rather abruptly by a more sudden and violent pitch than they had yet had, and when one passenger after another had gradually left their eyrie, Mark sat down on the sofa beside Madeline, and they both laughed a little at the seclusion of their corner, with nothing but the cherry wainscoting in front of them, and, high up, two ports which the wind and rain together threatened to break through at any moment.

"Could you not fancy this little house we are in, lifted bodily and carried overboard during one of these violent gales? Listen!" and she slightly turned her head, as the screaming, rushing wind beat against its frail barrier and carried with it a torrent that dashed angrily at their very feet. Then they plunged down, down into one of those unfathomable hollows, the very thought of whose black and tossing depths is an unspeakable horror to many, and then rose, as if borne on wings, only to quiver an instant on an uncertain eminence and then sink again into the very heart of the swelling tide.

"If it were day I would stand up on this sofa and lean against the port and look out until I seemed like the vessel itself winging its way like a petrel over the stormy waters. I love any experience that gives me the sensation of flying. Occasionally I have a dream in which I am wingless, but with an inward power of soaring movement which thrills me with delight every time I have it. Once I found myself, in such a dream, seated on a great ball of white cloud, interpenetrated in every direction with golden brightness, and then the cloud sank, and I moved above its soft brilliancy until we reached the earth, where my feet rested just as lightly as if I had taken a continuous step. If the power of sensation should be quickened immeasurably in another life, what inconceivable pleasure we shall have in that one way alone. I wonder if it is so with you? But with me, the passing of each year brings a keener and keener sense of an intangible but real nearness to an existence with experiences which of themselves make this life worth living. I feel as though I were only in the first chapter of a long, long story, of which I am the heroine, in which the plot and purpose will not clearly develop till after death.

"Yes, I have that almost ever present sense of living in two worlds, this one, and the one beyond. I think perhaps it accounts for what seems to me the puerilty of manifesting or rather asserting too

strong a personality. Of what use is it? There is so much time before us. My intensest pleasure is always in the present and what it leads to. I think very little of the past.

"I do not think much of it, because I will not," said Madeline musingly. There is always an undercurrent of consciousness in my mind, however, of its fatal shaping influences."

"It is an effort with me to have this consciousness. I enjoy an intellectual life and crave intellectual companionship, but my own personal experiences of intellectuality are intuitive, just as most of my instincts act so spontaneously that I am often in the midst of mental or physical action, before I am aware."

"I should say that you are nearly, if not quite, perfectly healthy, then," said Madeline. "You are, to all intents and purposes, winged, physically and mentally." She gazed at him with involuntary admiration and longing for the rare and blessed endowment of such adjustment. While her being worked along the same lines to a less extent, she felt the effort of the lever too often—the throb and strain of the screw.

He looked squarely into her eyes, feeling her sympathy, but not noticing her admiration. His love was too near its utterance.

"But," and he laid one hand on the other, emphatically, "a strong body and a clear mind, both of which I must admit have served me well, thus far, are incomplete without a strong soul. There is where I am out of harmony. I pray, but my prayers too often do not seem to rise above my head. I live much in the conscious enjoyment of an endless existence, but intuitively only. There ought to accompany this consciousness of immortality a spontaneous and exquisite spiritual conception, yes, companionship, which I can imagine, but which I so rarely feel that, proportionately, I may say, I am altogether undeveloped spiritually. Madeline, just as I have turned instinctively and intuitively toward many a material good and found it just what I needed, I turn spiritually to you. Will you take me, for life, for eternity, and mould me into something higher than I can be without you?"

She had bent forward as he began speaking, and, as he continued, the veil of all the misgivings that had hidden the profoundness of her affection was rent in twain. She felt that he exalted her above what she was able to be, yet he asked her to walk with him, side by side, in partnership and companionship which made death lose all but the most blessed significance, so far as they two were concerned. It was this higher nature which had shone through and glorified him in other ways, which she had felt but

had not seen, that had called forth irresistibly and naturally this last, best, highest affection of her whole being.

She took his hands and folded her own about them.

"Let us take each other," she said softly, "to help always, to hinder never, if we can be so wise as that. God sent you to me, to be mine—as I am yours."

They sat a long time in almost entiré silence—Madeline radiantly pale, her eyes shining like stars—Mark with a still elation and sense of the absoluteness of his possession of her and hers of him, that made words seem idle.

It was as if some angel had walked over the troubled waters around them to the deep seas of their hearts and had spoken in unutterable sweetness, "Peace, be still."

What did it matter to them that the fury of the storm increased, and that to keep one's footing became well-nigh impossible? To Madeline there came, after a time, a sense of weariness, and she had risen to go down stairs, when the captain came inside a second.

"You will be better off below, Madame," he said to her questions as to whether they were in danger. "We shall ride the gale, I believe, through God's mercy, but it is a bitter, angry night."

"My dearest," said Mark, when he was about leaving her at her cabin door, "I shall be outside here, in the saloon, all night. If anything should happen, come to me."

"I will."

They kissed and parted.

Donning her wrapper, she lay down on the sofa, not to sleep, but to think. Only that thin partition between her and the moaning, tossing waste outside. The beating roar was deafening. The gallant steamer rode the waves majestically. As she yielded herself to the long, rocking movement with the pleasure of a good sailor, her gigantic cradle seemed as secure and snug as the downy one of a little child. Gradually everything mingled in a confused and happy dream, and she slept.

When she awoke, it was with an odd, alert sense of something wrong. Her electric light was out. The steamer pitched and rolled in every direction at once, as it seemed to her, just waking from a sound sleep. On her ear came the groping, shuffling movement of uncertain feet, hurrying hither and thither. She struggled from the sofa in a momentary lull that ensued, and was instantly dashed across to her berth, to which she clung in desperation.

"Mark, oh, Mark!" she called in a half whisper, and then, starting forward again, clutching, as she did so, her hanging cloak, she tore it from its peg,

and groped along the narrow passage leading from her state-room. She came suddenly against a man whose arms were spread out as if feeling the way.

"Is it you, Mrs. Winchester?"

"Yes," and she grasped the strong arm which inclosed her fervently at the same time, and, holding her thus, led her toward the saloon.

"The mizzen mast is swept away. Our fires are flooded. We are at the mercy of the elements. Don't lose courage, sweetheart."

"It has not wavered, dear. We are together."

"Yes, thank God. Together forever, come what may.

"Those poor girls—mere children! Where are they, I wonder?" said Madeline, as they finally reached a corner where she could brace herself with some firmness. "Sit down by me, please," as Mark tried to stand, holding fast to the wainscoting.

They sat there in the darkness, listening to the frightened moans of women and the groping of a hundred panic-stricken souls hither and thither. No word of fear, no mention of the doom that seemed imminent crossed their lips. Each was unspeakably glad that their love had found expression before this perhaps fatal hour.

An hour later, a faint light began to creep across the vast room, revealing the confusion which reigned and the dumb fear on some faces and the hysterical unrest on others.

"Madeline, dearest, let me lead you to the door of your cabin, and I will stand outside while you put on all the wraps you can carry. We must be ready for the worst."

They made their way back. She came out again, presently, dressed for the exposure she might have to endure. "Are you warm enough?" she asked, feeling his coat.

He looked down and smiled as she did so; then, putting his arm about her, led her back.

They came face to face with Rose and Pussy, who were laughing and crying alternately.

"Where is your governess, my child?" asked Madeline.

"With the others, trying to get them dressed," exclaimed Rose. "O, if I do reach land again, I will never put my foot on this horrid sea. Let me stay with you, Mrs. Winchester, please do," and Rose clung desperately to her.

"Certainly. You, too, Pussy."

Mark led his little flock to a seat. Both he and Madeline found comfort in cheering the girls.

Toward the middle of the morning, the rain ceased, but a thick fog settled down, and then to the rest of the din was added the incessant blowing of the fog-horn and the alternate clang of the bell.

"Where are we, do you think?" whispered Madeline.

"Opposite Newfoundland."

She gave his hand a momentary pressure while patting Rose's head which was leaning on her shoulder.

Thus another hour passed. Then, without warning, while they were all sitting still and expectant, there was a shock—a continuous quiver, and then another, as if the steamer were in her death throes, and then a sudden, awful cessation of movement.

"We are on the rocks."

Rose covered her mouth, but the next instant broke out into loud moans.

"My dear Rose!" said Madeline calmly and a little sternly.

Rose looked up and met those gentle eyes, solemn but so calm, and with a great effort controlled herself.

There was a rush forward for the decks. Mark followed the crowd, holding Madeline by the hand, while the two girls clung to her skirts. They made their way up with great difficulty, and for an instant Mark closed his eyes as the grinding, surging roar smote upon his ears.

What hope could there be!

The boats were in readiness for lowering, and frantic men and half insane women were crying for places.

The fog lifted slightly, revealing a long, low ledge on which the steamer was stranded, but the further view was entirely shut off still.

"Let us wait," said Mark, "till the steamer shows some signs of breaking up. This may be our safest place."

"It seems to me they are mad to attempt to lower the boat in such a sea," said Madeline.

"It is a chance in a thousand, either way, I suppose; but while there is life, there is hope."

"There is always life, Mark; if not here, there!" She looked up.

"And no parting."

"No parting."

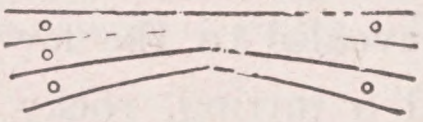
Noon came, and then as suddenly as it had fallen, the fog lifted and revealed to the few who had remained on board a jutting, rocky peninsula, on whose extreme point the steamer was spiked.

A loud cry of joy went up from the sailors as they saw their position.

An hour later, a crowd had collected on the rocks in answer to their signals. Soon the ropes were in place, and the passengers sent over one by one. At nightfall, although the bitterness of a northern winter penetrated them to the bone, all who had remained on board were saved.

Two days after, Mark and Madeline, with their luggage intact, and with the five girls and the

governess, all of whom clung to our travelers with the energy of desperation, embarked for Halifax en route to New York by train, which they reached without further adventure.



BOOK THREE.

CHAPTER I.

A DISTINGUISHED FAMILY.

On Madison square there is a towering brown-stone house with a wide stoop, a deep vestibule, a broad flight of stairs leading from the parlor floor—everything, in fact, to constitute a spacious, elegant home in one of the old-fashioned but still handsome sections of changing New York.

The house itself is forty years old, old enough to give an American family, had they occupied it from the time it was built, a claim to even fashionable respectability.

The family who did live in the Madison square house had been there only ten years. In that time, how many fortunes had changed hands, segments of not a few being in the possession of the present occupant. How many merchant princes and princely bulls and bears, and railroad emperors, and imperial corn and pork and wheat and cotton brokers had been dethroned, or transported from the market to

which they had brought nothing but a shrinkage of honest values to that mystery whither, whether rich or penniless, they could take nothing. But the house on Madison square had a bull for its master, whose horns were still tossing and tearing in Wall street; the house also contained a bevy of ambitious daughters with soft voices, keen, cold eyes, hard, practical faces, good figures, and clear, shrewd brains that seemed like a feminine fugue sounding fantastically the "long" and "short" manipulations of the sire who, in fifteen years, without a cent of capital to start with, now counted his property by as many millions.

Herter had furnished the house; Sypher had provided a few antiques; numerous paintings in both oil and water; presenting much color and rich effects, had been purchased at low values from struggling native artists; a library containing all the modern novelists, the standard poets, and a cyclopædia, was oriental in its upholstered magnificence, and, for the rest, a maid for each daughter and other servants in abundance, together with a boundless supply of gas shining through vari-colored shades, and lamps of all sizes and values illuminating romantic corners, gave an air of lavish expenditure and subdued splendor and bustle of life that made the house an immensely popular resort for young men.

None of the daughters married. Each had had her due number of flirtations and understandings. A score of proposals had been distributed among the six sisters, but still, here was Jeannette, the eldest, twenty-eight, and Posey, the youngest, irremediably seventeen—and the same buzz and flutter, and coming and going, proceeding as they had done for the past ten years, only growing greater and greater as each sister persisted at eighteen on "coming out," and sharing with the others the glitter and glow and company of down-stairs.

Every one of these girls was as ambitious socially as their father was financially.

The time had come when his great wealth brought him an invitation to join the Middlesex Hunts. He was a stockholder of the Esoteric riding school. The Victoria Regina was his club. He had a country-seat; a coachman and footman in livery, and whether it rained or blew or the mercury was at zero, his own horses took the young ladies everywhere. Cabs and hansoms might do in inclement weather for people whose horses became as tender as their house-dogs, but the Chubbock coach or brougham, or landau with its dark green body and wheels outlined in red, and high-stepping, short-tailed horses, never wearied in standing before the homes of the Misses Chubbock's endless list of acquaintances.

By and by, from desiring to possess station that was impregnable and family traditions that were honorable, the Misses Chubbock with one accord bought their father for a Christmas present the Book of Heraldry bound in vellum, and, while the eldest Miss Chubbock wrote hither and thither to find where the Chubbocks began, and, O, joyful possibility! whether they began at all, with a view to writing for private distribution, the ancestry, exploits, and honorable traditions of the family, the second Miss Chubbock, after long and weary searchings, on stormy evenings, under the light of a lamp with a rose-red shade, in her father's vellum-covered book, found, at eleven o'clock one night, and after the rest had all retired,—would she ever forget the hour, the place, or her feeling,—that she was at last able to legitimately account for her innate pride, her exclusiveness, and her instep—found, I say, that the Chubbocks were of noble blood! There, before her eyes, were the words:

"Chubbock—doubtless, originally Chou-de-bec, or de Chou-bec. A family of Normandy, of the ancient seigniory of Becque, a patrimony famous for a succulent vegetable much prized by William Cœur-de-Lion, who, in confiscating the land, ennobled the owner, playfully dubbing him Chou-bec or Chou-de-bec. Chou-de-bec followed the king to England, and thence, migrating to Ireland, became the ancestor of a numerous family, who sank into poverty during the wars of Henry II."

All that remained, therefore, was to establish the links between the twelfth and the nineteenth centuries.

Patty Chubbock slept little that night.

Jeannette, with such a clue in hand, redoubled her researches. The matter was also placed in the hands of an agent, to whom a handsome salary was promised, conditional on his success. In just one year the links were all discovered. A coat-of-arms of the time of Henry V. was found. The Chou-de-bec record was published and bound in Russia leather.

On the door of the carriages appeared a graceful, flowering design not unlike the capital of a Corinthian pillar with the acanthus leaves entirely blended together and curled inward instead of outward. Across this striking device ran the bar sinister, and from the top protruded two bird's claws grasping the motto, "In the end we succeed."

Dempsey and Carroll stamped a ream of their finest paper for each of the Misses Chubbock with this coat-of-arms. From that time the sisters grew more fastidious than ever over uniting their blue blood with that of any of the sons of the parvenues of Manhattan. The sisters? Five of the sisters felt in this way. Isabel, the fourth, though expressing herself very positively, had private views which my story will gradually develop. In these views, Posey, the youngest, might be said to share tentatively. However,

Posey was one of those intense conservatives who never openly took a side till victory perched on its banners. Then she entertained pronounced convictions. But Isabel had one of those clear minds whose opinions are seldom weakened or strengthened by prolonged conversations on a subject occupying her thought. She could sit perfectly still for an hour, her small, not unkindly, gray eyes fixed steadily on some spot on the carpet or rolling lazily and abstractedly around the room; but, when Isabel rose to her feet, her mind was made up. Everything in life with her represented unspoken or unconsummated values. The difference between her and her sisters was that they had openly and radically committed themselves to one line of thought and action. Isabel, confident in her own shrewdness, and loving shrewdness for its own sake, had decided, at twenty years of age, to have, so to speak, her private wire, which kept her informed of all those more abstruse conditions of the social and matrimonial world, and she had determined to be always on the rising side. Posey might be said to be the daily family newspaper that ordinarily neutrally chronicled Isabel's sayings and doings, giving a long, oral, commendatory editorial only when she had made a corner.

While glancing over the paper one morning, Isabel saw among the personals that Carroll Saxby was expected home on the following Monday on La Bretagne.

It occurred to her that she had not called on Mrs. Saxby since that lady's return to town. Mrs. Saxby enjoyed Isabel, and made her home one of those familiar resorts whither the young girl might go at any hour.

Having made up her mind to call, Isabel at once appropriated the coupé to her morning use, and, accordingly, on rising from the breakfast table, said, quite as a matter of course, "I speak for the coupé this morning."

"But Patty and I had agreed to spend the morning in shopping, Isabel, and unless we have the coupé, we can't finish," said Jeannette.

"You had the coupé yesterday, Jeannette," said Isabel persistently.

"Yes, but father sent me to do something for him. You can call a cab, Isabel."

"Why can't you, for shopping? I want the coachman and the footman."

"We do not wish to be drawing on our allowance for cabs all the time, Isabel. Then the coupé for you means twice what it does for the rest of us. You go off by yourself so much."

"If it is the money, Jeannette," said Isabel, magnificently, "I will pay for your cab."

"O, very well," said Patty, straightening her handsome shoulders, "if you can afford to pay for our cab, take the coupé. They say there always has to be one selfish member in a family."

Isabel took out her pocket-book, separated the neatly folded bills, took one out, then very deliberately putting it back, said, "Have the cab charged to my account, Jeannette, dear. Don't feel you must hurry home." Then, ringing for Munson, the coachman, she ordered the coupé for ten o'clock. In walking out of the room, she cast a swift, oblique glance at Posey, who threw her a kiss.

She hummed a satisfied little tune as she went up the broad stair-case to her room, a room always inviting from an orderly confusion which reigned there, and because of the extensive paraphernalia belonging to a fashionable girl's toilet. It had just been put in order. The cold morning air was fluttering the lace curtains. The sunlight, falling on the bureau, touched a variety of silk bags pendant from the gas jets. German favors pinned on the curtains and fastened around the mirror frame, and glinted from the silver backed combs and brushes spread in a neat row.

Isabel rang her maid up peremptorily from the basement, where she was breakfasting. When that functionary appeared out of breath, and asked in a tremulous, gasping voice, "Did you ring, Miss?" she replied, "Yes, I rang, of course. Put the windows down. Get my tailor suit, and brush the coat. Are my walking boots in order?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Very well. Be ready to go out with me at ten o'clock. Don't keep me waiting as you did yesterday, Annette."

"No, Miss. Can I do anything else, Miss?"

"I'll dress myself. That is all."

She stepped to the window when she was alone and looked out. She saw everything that was going on on the square, but she was thinking of Mrs. Winchester. She was deciding how to treat Madeline, if she should meet her. Isabel, like many another young girl, was much more concerned about what she thought of people than about what they thought of her. The question was what *her* attitude toward Mrs. Winchester should be. As to Mrs. Winchester's opinion of her — well, under existing circumstances, it was not worth considering. When she concluded her cogitations, she had arrived no further than to resolve to do nothing to displease Mrs. Saxby. That was expedient. She would have preferred to throw a shade of condescension into her manner, whether or no. She enjoyed that sort of thing, because of the importance it appeared to give her, which was greater or less, according to the age or dignity of the person with whom she assumed these airs.

At the present moment, though, it behooved her to change her dress, and, if she were to do it with the proper care, to change it at once.

She had a sturdy little figure, extremely well formed, which was carefully and too tightly corseted, but her long, full, tapering waist was sufficient reward for the discomfort induced. Her hands and face told no tale of congestion, for she had a colorless, yet healthy skin, matched by neutral brown hair. A well-turned wrist off-set by a very white and pretty hand, a really beautiful mouth and chin, a cold, intellectual eye, capable, however, of much tender expression, and a never failing belief in the potential power and present importance of Isabel Chubbock made, with her other attractions, a sufficiently interesting personality and one admirably adapted for the stage on which she had projected her ambitions. She was indeed a stylish girl, when, with Annette behind her, she issued out of the plate glass storm doors of her home, and paused to survey the equipage at the sidewalk.

"A little nearer to the sidewalk, Munson."

James, the footman, with a huge fur collar around his long neck, held the door open with an unction reserved for Miss Isabel alone. Munson, while motionless as a statue, his whip upright in the air, nevertheless saw everything that the young lady wore and rejoiced to sit on the box. Annette stepped in humbly after her mistress, and the immaculate coupé rolled away as a mud bespattered cab drew up,

which the elder sisters were only too glad to see, as they had telephoned time and again before even this vehicle responded.

Isabel would have been glad to dispense with Annette as a street companion, but, after much wearisome reflection, she had decided that such an appendage lent a necessary distinction. The more careful she was to never be seen unaccompanied, the firmer would be her reputation for a kind of unworldly worldliness which her accurate knowledge of ultra snobbery led her to believe a valuable characteristic matrimonially considered.

While she paused in the square hall of Mrs. Saxby's house to give her name and a message to the butler, she heard a faint rustling above her, and glanced up to see a lady in a soft gray morning dress sweeping down the spacious stairway.

The lady held a book in one hand, a finger between the leaves to keep the place. Her sparkling, steadfast eyes rested carelessly on Isabel, as she descended.

The girl, forgetful for a moment of whom the lady must be, looked at her with a kind of arrested surprise. Then, to her intense chagrin, she found herself gazing after a tall, willowy form disappearing in the shadowy recesses toward the library, and felt, in that second, that she had failed to awaken even a question in Mrs. Winchester's mind.

Soon after, Jasper, the butler, came to ask if "Miss Isabel would please go right up to Mrs. Saxby's sitting room."

In another instant, she was tripping rapidly up the stairs.

Then, with a tap which she followed by instantly opening the door, she glided in and extended both hands to Mrs. Saxby, saying effusively:

"It is the longest age since I have seen you. And you wouldn't even write a note to your little Isabel. So now that we are settled for the winter, I have come to hunt you up."

"We have been just as busy, my dear. But I'm delighted to see you once more. How well you look. A little color, too, which is rare for you. Did you walk way up here from Madison square?"

"No. My maid is a poor walker, which is a sad fault. She speaks such excellent French, though, that I've concluded to keep her. I came up with Annette, in the coupé."

"Do you have to bring your maid when you drive?"

"O, yes!" said Isabel with determination. "It is one of papa's rules that I am never to go out unattended. It is a fact, dear Mrs. Saxby, that when a girl has a maid, gentlemen do not stare at her so. Papa says he doesn't know what there is about me that makes men stare so."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Saxby, giving Isabel an admiring look which fed her vanity.

"And you are all alone, too. How nice! I can stay just as long as I want to."

"Not alone, but you can stay as well as not. Can't you lunch with us?"

"O, no. I must be home long before that. I did not mean to stay as long as that."

"Do let me send Annette back with the coupé. And if you are afraid to go home alone, I will have Julie take you. Come, stay to lunch."

"Well, if you will send Julie to the opera house with me, in time for the symphony—instead of home," said Isabel hesitatingly and prettily. Then, drawing back as if on second thought, "But you have company."

"Yes, my dear friend, Mrs. Winchester. As she will spend the winter, that need make no difference."

"How grateful she must be to you."

"I don't understand, Isabel," said Mrs. Saxby a little severely.

"I mean how very good of you to give her such a long invitation."

"She is the only friend, I think, whom I would ask to stay so long."

"Of course. You are always a little better and do a little more—than—any—body—I know!" She put her arms around Mrs. Saxby's neck, nestling there like a kitten.

Now Mrs. Saxby liked the petting of young people immensely. She liked their flattery. This girl, however, must be made to understand Mrs. Winchester's position, before they met at lunch.

Isabel understood it better than Mrs. Saxby could possibly have defined it. She had heard it canvassed and discussed at a dozen luncheons. She and her sisters had sat in solemn conclave a whole evening when a chance caller had told them that Mrs. Winchester was in New York again, and visiting Mrs. Saxby. They all agreed that Mrs. Saxby was too regardless of public opinion, and that Mrs. Winchester was presuming and selfish to try to enter society again under Mrs. Saxby's escort.

Isabel with her hands still resting in Mrs. Saxby's, looked at that lady with expressionless, wide-open eyes, but a beguilingly tender mouth as she listened to what her friend termed a misconception and real social cruelty.

"Mrs. Winchester is the noblest woman that ever lived, Isabel. She is a much greater loss to society than society can ever be to her. Then she is a woman of infinite resources."

"That shows she has been unfortunate, Mrs. Saxby. All these awfully, awfully clever women are unfortunate. But of course, papa could never say anything if I met her in your house. Papa, I know, is foolishly particular about whom we know. Al-

though I am only a girl, without much knowledge of the world, still I am learning enough to feel sure that you are—more—generous than anyone else would be."

Mrs. Saxby dropped the girl's hands. Her eyes flashed. "Isabel, I love Mrs. Winchester, next to John and Carroll, more than any one in this world. You do not know what you are talking about, my child, or I should be angry."

"O, I am such a blunderer. Do forgive me for my stupidity. You will see how charming I will be to Mrs. Winchester."

All the same, she meant that in some solitary encounter the lady should atone for ignoring such a presence as her own during that momentary meeting in the hall. It was her duty—hers—Miss Isabel Chubbock's—to draw the line somewhere, between the people she could know and those whom it would be absolutely perilous for a young lady with such a mounting ambition to recognize.

Nothing could have been more perfect than Isabel's cool self-consciousness tempered to a girlish unconsciousness, as she entered the dining-room from the parlor, side by side with Mrs. Saxby.

Mrs. Winchester was already there, standing in the bay-window terminating the room, and idly glancing out while holding the draperies back with one hand.

Isabel gave an envious smothered little gasp which she choked in her throat, as she observed the tall form and graceful attitude in her march down the long rooms. It would have suited her to have the lady watching her entrance; for she had it all planned in her mind just how she would nod when the introduction was given, and how she would preserve her dignity in any conversation that should follow, and, how, also, she would have a bag of news and supposition and criticisms for the first lunch party she attended.

Mrs. Saxby walked right on to Mrs. Winchester, but Isabel, having reached the table, skillfully fell a little behind, and so when Mrs. Saxby said, "Mrs. Winchester," and, as that lady turned, "My young friend, Miss Isabel Chubbock," Isabel, in a position to escape Rebecca's observation, raised her little Chinese eyebrows barely perceptibly as Madeline glanced at her, and then, with a sweet smile and a cold eye, made her prettiest salutation, leaving Madeline infinitely amused at an attack from such a youthfully feminine quarter.

It is one thing to know a condition of affairs, and another to notice it.

Madeline took her seat opposite Rebecca, Isabel between them, and, with a faultless poise of head and carriage, turned graciously to the young lady, looked

at her benignantly with a calm, kindly scrutiny, and, as if having come to a conclusion quickly, asked, "Are you having a gay winter?"

Ordinarily, Isabel would have hailed such a question as giving her an opportunity to launch into a rapid rehearsal of the brightest social events of her life. But this question from Mrs. Winchester simply filled her with rage. There was an intellectual quality about the older lady which she felt, and with the inconsistency common to us all, while having no favors to give herself, she instantly resented it that Madeline should take it so for granted that she was a merely fashionable young lady. It was true that she desired to be considered fashionable; she desired to be considered ultra exclusive; but, while never feeling even a fleeting qualm of shame, if she appeared to lack in mere knowledge, she aimed at having her mental possibilities cover a wide horizon. Few, even ordinary, girls can grow up in New York without learning the art of appearing well on a very little and suggesting untold capacity; whether it be in physical or mental furniture, the question becomes with many of them, in time, the scintillating quality of the appearance instead of an actuality of performance representing the expenditure of force, or real development. All of Isabel's education had been in the direction of appearances. There were in consequence very few subjects on which she could not say some

borrowed bright things and occasionally an original clever sentence or two. She was a good listener, a close observer, a member of several of those labor-saving classes so much in vogue in cities, where one lady becomes a kind of talking cyclopædia for the others. She danced well, spoke French and German, was *au courant* with the best plays and operas, frequented the symphony rehearsals, played the piano tolerably well, and sang abominably but with much volume, most of the airs popular on the stage. She was generally spoken of, though, as the brightest girl in her set, and society notes frequently mentioned incidentally that she was accomplished. It was, therefore, with a calm sense of power that she said:

"Yes, very gay indeed, if you mean, do I have many engagements. I regret to say that I shall have to ask Mrs. Saxby to excuse me early from lunch to hear the symphony this afternoon. What do you think of the youthful leader of the symphony?"

"I have not heard him."

"But you have read about him."

"Certainly. Reading is not hearing. Is he like his father?"

"Ye-es—and n-o," said Isabel tentatively. "He has a trace of passion which is helpful. That is where the Philharmonic leader has the great advantage in his concerts. He perfectly controls the spirit of the music. Now the symphonies are correct, but so cold. Don't you find them very cold, Mrs. Saxby?"

"Ah, I am no judge. Ask me about something spectacular, and I will give you an opinion. An opera, or a play, or pictures, they are my delight."

Isabel nodded her head approvingly and respectfully.

"Do you sing, Mrs. Winchester?"

"Yes."

"And play?"

"A little."

"Classical music?"

"I attempt it," said Madeline with a smile. "You play, of course?"

"O, yes," said Isabel carelessly. "Such an exigent professor as I have. One has to play when taught by him, whether or not."

"Isabel does play very well indeed," said Mrs. Saxby.

Isabel spread her hands in a deprecatory manner. Her aim was to draw Mrs. Winchester out, and she knew that she could not do so if the conversation turned upon herself, pleasant as it would have been to comment further upon such a fruitful theme.

"You have been in Europe a long time, Mrs. Winchester. Do you like it better than this country?" Isabel felt that she was daring, but she held her countenance sufficiently ingenuous to look steadily into Madeline's hazel eyes, even while having a slight mental struggle against their dominant honesty.

"I do not like it as well," said Madeline, knowing that only the simplest, baldest truth could take this irrepressible girl unawares.

"You don't!" exclaimed Isabel with unguarded, blunt surprise. It was on the tip of her tongue to retort with, "Why did you stay so long?" but there was a steadiness and yet no emotional glow in those clear eyes that abashed and piqued her. There was a rustling in Mrs. Saxby's chair, too, that was admonitory.

"Isabel," she said, a trifle sharply, "I don't hear anything about the Enderby's these days. Are they going to stay at Lakewood all winter? Is Mary Enderby so delicate as that?"

"O, they are coming back when Lent begins. Mary has had her own way so long that they can't say no to her, so they are staying out of the city till the ball season is over. She will dance; and if Mary dances, she dies! They are all down there, sleeping on pine pillows and walking in pine woods, and sitting in glass galleries—and hearing the wind m-o-a-n. They write that it is lovely; but I know; I've tried it."

"You and Mary were so intimate."

"Yes; but I was beginning so outgrow Mary before she went away, although we are of the same age," she added cautiously.

Isabel's twenty years sat on her consciousness like a rook on a town-clock. It made the past time, merry enough in itself, appear ominous of the future. So many of the girls in her set were already married, and she was not even engaged. For Madeline's benefit, she added:

"It seems such a little while ago that Mary and I were out with our nurses, day after day, together. And here we are, young ladies. But it is nice to be a young lady. Well, I must go.

"No, dear Mrs. Saxby, I can't wait for the cream. May I tell Julie she is to take me to the opera house?"

"She understands," said Rebecca.

"I will send her right back, as I can go home in Mrs. Porterfield's carriage. We have invited her to share our box. Some time you must let me come for you, Mrs. Saxby. I believe I can make you enjoy the symphonies."

She had risen from her chair and stood with her hand caressingly on Rebecca's shoulder. She turned and made a pretty little farewell bow to Madeline. Then, when half way to the door, said, with her face in profile, "By the way, when is Carroll coming? Never, I do believe."

There was a pale, pink flush on Isabel's neck and cheek which Rebecca noticed; she smiled a little as she replied with purposed vagueness, "This month."

"Really? I am surprised. He will be a great addition to the winter gaiety. Good-bye."

CHAPTER II.

FAMILY CONCLAVES.

CARROLL SAXBY approached New York on a glorious December day. A high tide partially concealed the ugly piers and grim piles of the ferry slips. Staten Island and the Jersey shore loomed in misty blueness on the left, as if an Indian summer haze still lingered among their valleys and hills. The spires, the domes, and the tall buildings of the city shone against the deep blue sky with more than Venetian warmth and richness of color. Craft of all kinds disported in the magnificent harbor. From the picturesque villas on either shore with their palatial inclosures of private ground, to the airy proportions of the great metropolitan bridge, his eyes wandered with a restful sense of nearness, of national prosperity, and the nearness of home.

The thought that this was his native land gave him for a few minutes the zest of youth unstained by folly and sin.

No one looking on that blonde face with its clear blue eye, at the mass of waving brown hair brushed up high from the forehead, at the muscular frame, closely knit and sinewy, could have failed to be proud to acknowledge Carroll as kith and closest kin.

When Rebecca caught sight of him in the bow, as the vessel stopped in mid-stream preparatory to swinging toward her pier, her happiness and pride were unbounded.

"See, John, there he is; take the glass, quick! He is in the bow. O, how handsome and good he looks! Dear boy!" and other caressing words died in a happy gurgle in her throat, as she waived her handkerchief frantically.

"Yes, that's Carroll!" said John sedately but casting a furtive glance of pride and complacency at Rebecca. "He's very much changed since we were over, but we would know the cut of that face—eh, wifey?—twenty years hence, if we never saw it between now and then."

"Know it? Why, I know all the changes already, but they haven't altered him. There, now they are coming in! O, John, how can I wait? My heart is in my mouth."

John took her hand, which had crept into his arm, and patted it. "He's safe across now, Rebecca. Ten minutes more."

"O, John, what a blessing to have our boy come home with honor, and just as sweet and good as he was ten years ago. Oughtn't we to be thankful?"

John drew a sigh, half of relief that his son was so near, and full of hope that was really as much faith as Rebecca's that Carroll the man was only the expansion of the boy. There was, though, in John's masculine thought: "Three years are a long time to have lived from home, and boys as good as mine have come back bad men."

An hour later, however, there was not a prouder or more confident father than Mr. Saxby.

"Hasn't altered a bit, Rebecca! As smart as a Harvard professor and as pure as a girl. Why, I believe he is as sweet and wholesome as Blanche Allerton. I can't praise his morals higher than that."

"Ah, John," said Rebecca, "if Carroll and Blanche should marry, my last wish for our boy would be gratified."

"It would please me as well as you, my dear. Just as like as not, however, he will fancy a girl like — Isabel Chubbock, for instance."

"Never, John, never!" Rebecca turned on him with astonishment. "I am sure, if there were nothing else, with Carroll's fastidious notions about girls, Isabel is too ultra-American."

"That's just the reason he would enjoy her. I dare say he is tired to death of reserved, sweet girls like Blanche, whom you would have to know a year to discover that there was any warmth in them. Ha, ha, ha!" and John threw his head back and laughed heartily as he thought of Isabel. "She is the kind of girl to throw herself right into a man's arms and out again the very next minute—to be coaxed back a second time. I always amuse myself, when we meet Isabel out, in watching her maneuvers."

"Isabel is excellent at heart, and so clever."

"Yes, sharp as a razor, and with as many airs as an orchestra. Her tunes are set to all kinds of instruments, too. She will never be a failure. It's astonishing, Rebecca, how much that girl resembles her father. He wins every time in Wall street. She will make just as good scores in her sphere of action."

"She fails very often," said Rebecca simply. "Sometimes I am sorry for her. Isabel has some noble traits."

Their conversation was interrupted by Carroll's entrance, who glanced at his mother with undisguised fondness.

Rebecca absorbed that expression with a swelling heart. Her tears came as he tucked his cheek beside hers and then kissed her as she made some new comment full of motherly love.

"You do not ask after any of the pretty girls, Carroll," said Mr. Saxby, after a while. "They are legion."

"I suppose so," said Carroll, indifferently. At that instant Rosalia was tugging at his affection and making all this gay home-coming a splendid misery. Somehow, she had had a fashion of tormenting him since that *rencontre* in Interlachen. When he fancied, too, that he had buried his love for her, forever. If her face had not been so sad, as she leaned against the tree! He had been able to think of her as gay and volatile and doubtless married, till those despairing eyes had watched him out of sight in Interlachen. If only some one else had entered the place from which he had tried so hard to banish Rosalia. The long sea voyage had given him too ample opportunity for reflection.

Rebecca noticed the look of fretful anxiety on his face, and said, "Don't thrust the girls at him, John. Carroll has ample time to make his choice leisurely."

"I don't know about that!" said John oracularly. "The men in my family always married young, and they were the better for it."

"Is Isabel Chubbock coming out this winter?" Carroll roused himself to ask.

John's eyes twinkled.

"Coming out? She is out. There are six roses in that Chubbock bunch; four in full bloom, one opening bud, that's Isabel! She's a bud one minute and a wide open flower the next. She will be a study for you, my boy! And there is Posey!"

"All right!" said Carroll, good-naturedly.

"It looks, though," said his father, determined to carry out his fancy, "as if whoever took one of the flowers would have to pluck the whole bunch."

"Do you remember Blanche Allerton, Carroll?" said Rebecca timidly.

"Little Blanche Allerton. A pretty blonde thing with an awfully severe mother with English notions?"

"That's the one," said John, slapping his knee.

"Yes, I remember her," said Carroll. "Is she beautiful?"

"Very!" said Rebecca warmly.

Carroll nodded.

"You can meet all the girls at our riding club, my boy. Riding clubs are our latest kink. By the way, this is your mother's night, and you must accompany her."

"I'm at her service for all hours and all occasions. And now, father, if you are going down street, I'll go with you," said the son, as John began putting on his overcoat.

"Glad to hear you say so, Carroll. I'd like to show you the new office, and I'd like to introduce you at the Exchange. There are three or four hours of the business day left yet."

Carroll lifted his mother's hand respectfully to his lips, smiled affectionately into her beautiful brown eyes, and saying gaily "*Auf wiedersehen,*" left the room.

While he was driving down town with his father, Blanche and Mrs. Allerton were having an animated discussion over Isabel.

Mrs. Allerton's eye-glasses bridged her aristocratic nose. Her white hair, arranged a la Pompadour, a style she never altered, was as soft and silky as her breakfast sack of mauve. One long white hand was tapping the table emphatically, as she said, "It is no use, Blanche, no use whatever. I can't allow it, and I should think you would know better yourself."

"I can't see a bit of harm in it. Everybody else has taken Isabel up, and it is high time we did. Nobody else but you, Mamma, considers me such an ultra precious morsel of humanity. And I am sure," added Blanche with a pout, as Mrs. Allerton's lips shut more and more firmly, "and I am sure, if we can go to the Chubbock reception, it can't do me any harm to invite Isabel to drive in the park."

"Blanche, how silly you can be, when you try! What is a reception! A grand conglomeration of

nonentities and a few celebrities. I don't object to your knowing the Chubbocks at the distance of a reception; but, to drive *alone* with one of those girls, and Isabel especially, why, my dear, your father would feel outraged."

"Well, what am I to do about it?" said Blanche desperately. "I have invited her, and for to-day."

"Send a messenger-boy with a note that you are ill and can't go. And don't, my dear, be caught in such a box again. Isabel would fast a month to drive with you. She knows the worth of the attention, if you do not."

"Mamma," said Blanche, looking up with a flush of mortification, "it makes me feel unutterably vulgar to think so much of myself. I am not ill."

"You will be, if you go out with that girl. So it amounts to the same thing. Here! I'll write the note and you can copy it."

Blanche leaned her head on her hand and looked drearily out of the window.

Mrs. Allerton opened her portfolio, and five minutes later read the following to Blanche:

"*My Dear Miss Chubbock:*"

Blanche looked up. "I call her Isabel."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Allerton in desperation. "Well, 'Dear Isabel,' then."

"*Dear Isabel:*

"I regret exceedingly that a sore throat will keep me at home to-day. You know, as I am subject to quinzy, that I have to be very careful. Hoping that you will not be disappointed, and with a thousand regrets that our pleasure must be interfered with,

"Yours,

"BLANCHE ALLERTON."

"I think it is cruelly cold, and I know she will be angry," said Blanche, with tears in her voice.

"What if she is!" I put in 'a thousand regrets' very grudgingly, I can assure you," said her mother. "I did think that would please you."

"I don't like to hurt people. I don't think it is nice. I hate above all things to lie."

"Blanche!"

She looked up with a desperate attempt at bravery. But her lids fluttered, and there was a nervous swallow in her usually calm throat.

"When a young lady reaches the point where she will break the sixth commandment, my dear, it does not become her to be over conscientious. And now, my darling," said Mrs. Allerton, as Blanche stood there, looking utterly helpless and miserable, "write off the note without any further fuss, while I ring. If it is any comfort to you, child, you may be sure that Isabel Chubbock will attribute that note to the one to whom it belongs. I feel able to bear her wrath."

Blanche succumbed, as she had hundreds of times before.

The note reached Isabel while the six sisters were lingering over a late breakfast, discussing all the pros and cons connected with the seven hundred invitations already issued for the reception.

"Now, Posey, if you do show yourself," Isabel was saying warningly, "it won't be well for you. Not even the tip end of your nose is to be seen."

"Everybody knows that there is still another sister who has to come out," said Posey.

"That does n't matter. There is no need of thrusting it upon their attention till the last minute. I think girls," said Isabel, turning to the other four, "that we ought to have a definite agreement about our places and keep them!"

Her gray eyes rested, as she uttered the last words, on the middle couplet of sisters, Annie and Maud, who, as neither the eldest nor the youngest, generally fared the worst.

"Of course Jeannette and Patty will have to be in the front drawing-room with their particular friends who receive with them. You and Maud, Annie, might take the library; and I suppose I shall have to reign in the dining-room."

"It is the best place, you know it is!" chimed Annie and Maud in concert. "We'll take the dining-room, and let you have the library."

"It would never do, girls," said Jeannette.

"No, I'm afraid it would n't," added Patty.

"We might as well be up stairs with Posey," said Maud. "People will only use the library to pass through."

"Well!" said Isabel, with high determination, "You will have to take the library girls, or nothing at all. It would n't look well when you are next older to Jeannette and Patty, for you to be in the dining-room."

"I am tired to death of being in the middle," exclaimed Annie. "I do think, Jeannette, that you and Patty might get married."

"We might, long ago!" said Patty, serenely, "if we had not been Chubbocks. There are very few young men in New York, though, that we could think of marrying. Everything has to be taken into consideration."

"I do n't believe all that nonsense about the Choude-becs, Patty. I just believe you made it up out of the whole cloth."

"Really, Annie, I would be ashamed to disparage myself. What did Huntingdon say about our noses, when he was painting our dear, dead mamma's portrait? He said they were of a pronounced English type. I am sure that shows an *old* family, to say the least."

"O, every family is an old one, or there would not be any people in the world. Well, I know one thing!" said Annie, with a toss of her head, "if papa should die and the property be divided, Maud and I are going off by ourselves. We've settled all that long ago, haven't we, Maudie."

"Yes, indeed!"

"I think it is an excellent idea!" said Isabel, loftily. "A note for me, Munson?"

"Yes, Miss."

She took the thick, square envelope off the tray, recognized Blanche Allerton's monogram—it was the first note Isabel had ever received from Blanche—and fingered the letter a little uncertainly a second. She would have preferred to read it when alone, on account of possible questions, but impatience got the better of her prudence, and she tore open the envelope.

The five sisters sat in silence, their ten eyes fixed on her face.

"What's the matter, Isabel?" asked Posey.

"Is it a regret?" said Annie insinuatingly.

"Whom is it from, Isabel?" said Jeannette kindly.

"Wait till she finishes," said Patty, as Isabel read and reread the letter.

"It's from Blanche Allerton. That's whom it is from!" cried Maud triumphantly. "And she can't go to drive. I told you it would be so."

"Gracious!" said Isabel, with a stifled breath. "I wish my letters could come by private delivery." Rising from the table, she rushed out of the room.

"If it is so, I think it is real mean!" said Posey.

"It will do her good," said Annie, unrelentingly.

"Yes, I like to see Isabel come up with once in a while," added Maud, thoughtfully. "But I knew Mrs. Allerton would stop that."

"I should think you would consider the family credit first, Maud," said Patty. "For my part, I think the Chubbocks much better than the Allertons."

"But nobody else does," said Posey, stoutly.

"Never admit that even to yourself, Posey," said Patty, severely. "I'm sure, I'm real sorry for Isabel."

"So am I," added Jeannette.

"Isabel always stands up for me, and I think it's a downright shame," said Posey.

Annie and Maud sat still.

"Do you suppose they will send a regret for the reception, Jeannette?" said Posey wonderingly.

"No, child! Mr. Allerton's business interests are too much involved with papa's for that. I suppose they will feel perfectly safe in coming to the reception. I'll tell papa of this, though," said Jeannette, with determination. "It is really a family matter."

Isabel, meanwhile, having locked herself in her room, sat down to think. If she had no other merit, she was rigidly honest with herself in these personal interviews. First, she denounced herself as a great simpleton for telling the girls of her triumph before it was consummated. Secondly, she asked herself if it were worth while to be angry with Blanche. This she decided in the negative. That she would drive with Blanche or that Blanche should drive with her, she made up her mind then and there. Then she rescrutinized herself, her antecedents, her appurtenances, to discover what it was, what was the particular thing that Mrs. Allerton found objectionable. She allowed Blanche to call, and nothing else. Theater parties, lunches, visits to their country place, one and all had been evaded or refused. What could she do? To win Blanche Allerton was to conquer the last in a line of social defenses that one after another had succumbed.

The same young men called on her that would call on Blanche this winter; only this was her third season, and it was Blanche's first. There was indeed a difference! Her gray eyes contracted; they almost closed; then they expanded. She was thinking of Carroll Saxby. If it were true that he was coming so soon, he would be back for the reception, and if! Then! She would be as new to Carroll as Blanche. She knew, as everybody did in the microcosmic world

in which her little orb revolved, that the two brightest planets in their sphere were Carroll and Blanche. Carroll naturally, therefore, was the chief star in Mrs. Allerton's horoscope. As she coined this figure it pleased her, and she smiled slightly. But then, Blanche Allerton was cold and simple, and if beautiful—bah!

She got up, went to the mirror, and performed a series of archings and smilings and pale pink flushings, of dilating eyes and tremulous lips, of nervous little pickings with the fingers, and cold, statuesque posings, of severe, high, unconscious, innocent glances, that diverted her so thoroughly that she forgot her grief in her art.

When she went down stairs dressed to go out, she felt as indifferent and confident as she looked.

"Where are you going, Isabel?"

"I am going out."

"Tell me—tell Posey."

"I am going out." She looked at Posey, her gray eyes shimmering with soft light, smiled as she passed her youngest sister, waited an instant till Annette appeared, and then, in another instant, was gone.

Posey puckered her brow in discouraged admiration. She hung all her faith on Isabel. Should she ever be like her, with so many mysteries, so many engagements, such airy independence, such untold resources?

Isabel arrived presently at Mrs. Saxby's.

"*Liebe Tante Saxby*, art thou alone?" she whispered, going up-stairs unannounced, and in spite of Jasper's remonstrances that his mistress was lying down, half opening the door of Mrs. Saxby's room.

"Yes, my dear, come in," issued through the crack in a drowsy tone.

The next minute, Isabel was fussing over Rebecca, and calling her by all sorts of German diminutives, as Mrs. Saxby had taken to studying German the last year, "on account of Carroll."

"You aren't well, *blümchen*."

"Oh, yes; only a little tired." Rebecca kept her happy secret. It seemed sweeter unspoken.

"Are you going to the riding-school to-night?"

"Yes."

"Will you take me with you?" Isabel made a pretty, appealing, childish mouth. "Papa can't go this week."

Rebecca looked perplexed. Her husband's comments on Isabel lingered in her mind with peculiar force now that Carroll was home; but her natural amiability, as well as that mistake so many mothers make, that since Isabel was a girl whom she certainly would not marry if she were a man, no son of hers would therefore do otherwise, led her finally to say "Certainly."

Isabel noticed the restraint, but it did not suit her purpose to appear to do so. What if the newspaper item were true, and Carroll were coming that very day? She covered Rebecca with kisses, sat and chatted a while on the coming reception, discreetly avoided all mention of Carroll, and presently went tripping down-stairs and out "wid dem ar kittenish ways what air variably mischeevous," as Jasper told Aurora, his wife, that evening in the kitchen.

At dinner, Rebecca mentioned that Miss Chubbock would come at half past eight to go with them to the riding-school.

"Isabel?" asked John, suspending everything.

"Yes," said Rebecca, nervously.

Carroll looked from one parent to the other, much amused.

"The papers will have it that Carroll and she are engaged."

"Nonsense," said Rebecca. "If Carroll prefers, he can stay at home," but her voice trembled, and she looked at him appealingly.

"I shall do no such thing, *mater pulchrissima mia*. It makes no difference to me if they say I am engaged to Isabel."

"Yes it does," said John, getting up and pacing the floor, while Jasper's flaring ebony ears drank in this sweet morsel of gossip for Aurora. "Why, it would be a feather in that little rogue's cap that she

would flutter in everybody's face all winter. You would almost have to become engaged to Isabel, if such a rumor got afloat."

"Come, come, father, I wouldn't stay at home under any consideration, now. I do not suppose that Isabel knows I am home."

"Yes she does," said John, grimly. "She has private telephonic connections with every social event in New York—or appears to have. What made you say she could go with you, Rebecca? You do not often do a foolish thing," he added, mollifying, for at the least sign of tears on her part over any affair in which they differed, his vexation melted completely.

At this juncture, the far-away trill of the electric door-bell gave warning of Isabel's approach.

"Close the doors to the drawing-room, Jasper."

Isabel did not know that Carroll had arrived, but, as her boots struck the marble tiling of the hall as she pattered after Jasper to the library, she was imagining what an enviable condition of affairs it would be, if only he were back and were to accompany them to the club. She was pursuing all the issues of such a happy conjunction, while standing beside the library table under the full glare of the gas, when the sound of approaching voices made her look up.

She was certainly extremely pretty and *distingue*, standing there under the golden light. Her dark

blue habit, fitting without a wrinkle, set off the full but delicate outlines of her figure. The square riding hat harmonized with the *retrousse* nose and short upper lip. The color of her costume made her clear skin look like ivory. When she was thoroughly pleased no face could be softer, and yet its intellectuality and shrewdness were never veiled. It was this odd mixture of contradictory expressions which gave her an immense piquancy. Her gray eyes looked black in their mild composure, and they assumed an honest and beautifying expression, as Carroll walked in with his mother.

He thought her undeniably pretty and American, and, like every other man who met her, had an instant unexplainable impression that she was the kind of woman to get on amazingly well with in a *tête-a-tête*.

"Really, Mr. Carroll," said Isabel, extending her hand, for whose immaculate glove she inwardly thanked her kindly fates, "this is a great surprise. *When* did you arrive?"

"This morning."

"And you never told me!" said Isabel, flushing over what she instantly interpreted as the happy significance of Rebecca's silence. "I feel like an intruder, and I am sure I am one. Do send me home, Mrs. Saxby."

John could have groaned. If she were sent home, Carroll would have to accompany her; if she went

to the riding-school, why, he would accompany her there. Isabel had both horns of the dilemma in her hands, and she was the girl to take the utmost advantage of her position.

She felt delightfully collected and victorious.

"You will not interfere with our pleasure in the least, Isabel," said Rebecca. "This is the best evening, too. The Allerton's will be there and several others whom Carroll will enjoy meeting, and all of whom I think you know."

"O, I know Blanche Allerton very well," said Isabel with insinuating tones of great intimacy. Blanche and I were to have driven together this afternoon, but it was too raw and windy. These high winds always give me a sore throat." She arched her white neck above her shining collar and felt it as if it were really a little tender now.

"Perhaps you ought not to go out again to-night," said John, who did not believe a word about the drive.

"O, yes; I came up in a close carriage, and it is only a step down to the school."

"Well, Isabel, we will leave you to talk with Mr. Saxby, and Carroll and I will go to get ready."

When John and Isabel were thus left alone, they gazed at each other steadfastly a second. Neither spoke, for fear the other would have the advantage. Isabel was not afraid of Mr. Saxby, but she felt like

acting cautiously in his presence. Mr. Saxby watched her as he would a cat who supposed herself free to play any prank she chose. Just now, Isabel chose to be coy and simple, and yet to act as if Mr. Saxby could of course meet with no other young girl quite so desirable. She was aware that this was Patty's stage trick, but then Patty was not there to emphasize the imitation.

"Did you see last night's Post?" said John suddenly.

"No," replied Isabel, softly,—ther, after a pause, "Was there anything special in it?"

"An item on your approaching reception, and quite a lengthy paragraph on Carroll's expected arrival to-day."

"Ah?" said Isabel. Her lips remained parted, and her eyes met John's with soft inquiry. Then, innocently, "Were they in the same column near together? I want to look them up."

"I don't remember. I suppose they came under personals. Everybody down-town seemed to know that Carroll was home, because of that paragraph. But we are very much honored in having the first call from you."

Did Mr. Saxby mean to tease her or to compliment her? Or did he intend to be rude? She suspected the last, and accordingly murmured in the most dulcet tones:

"You receive me so charmingly here, always, that it is no wonder I chance to be the first, although, Mr. Saxby, if I had known, I should have preferred to see him in my own home. But everybody will be delighted to welcome him back." She threw this last bonmot at John's paternal appetite for praise. However, even that had been satiated during the afternoon, so that he only replied, "Humph!"

Rebecca and Carroll entered presently, and then the trio departed, leaving John to "chew the cud of bitter thought." That it was very bitter, may be surmised from the fact that he doubled up his fat fist and shook it after Isabel as she went out of the front door.

The riding-school was gay with light and horses, jockeys, and a party of twenty who made up the club for that evening. There were the Allertons, the Brouxes, the Wylies, and the Kittredges. They all saw Isabel come in with Carroll.

Her heart gave one glad little hot bump against her side, as Mrs. Allerton adjusted her glasses and frowned on her at a distance. There was Blanche, too. Was she dying of envy? Isabel wondered. She just hoped she was. Everybody came up to shake hands, and there stood Carroll between his mother and her, as if he belonged to them both. Isabel smiled and flushed, and looked up into Carroll's face and then down on the floor with such a pretty

personal interest in all the congratulations, and Carroll had so forgotten her for the moment, that she could dare go on playing this part with more and more abandonment, until Mrs. Kittredge, who prided herself on finding out every engagement as soon as it was made, whispered to Mrs. Wylie, so that Isabel heard, "that it was very evident that there was some understanding between Isabel Chubbock and Carroll Saxby, but it was a pity that she was so elated that she could not hide her feelings better."

What cared Isabel, now that she had set the ball rolling? She only hoped that the thrilling news would reach Mrs. Allerton's ears that very night.

Carroll stood by while she was mounted, glanced with involuntary admiration at her carriage as she started off round the ring, and presently, his mother being mounted also, he sprang to his horse and was at Isabel's side in another instant, where she took care to keep him for the next few minutes.

"She has a wonderful pair of eyes," thought Carroll, as she looked straight into his; "clear and cool, and green as a wave in mid-ocean tipping up high and thin toward the sunlight."

"Do you ever ride in the park, Miss Isabel?"

"O, yes, with papa, often."

Her glance softened. Her full under lip trembled with a pretty expectancy.

"Do you think your father would trust you to ride with me?"

"I am quite sure, if you will ask him. These autumn days before it gets too cool are lovely."

She looked at him again, until, yielding to her strong volition, he asked her to set a day.

"Thursday!" she said, thoughtfully, "at four?" That was the day and the hour at which Blanche and her mother invariably rode.

Carroll bowed, and soon went back to his mother.

"My dear," said Rebecca, "I wish you would show Blanche Allerton a little attention."

"I will, presently. Isabel has a delightful faculty of making a fellow feel at home with her."

"This is her third season," said Rebecca significantly.

"That makes her all the more interesting to me. She has nothing further to learn. A man may meet her more on his own footing."

"My dear!" expostulated Rebecca.

Carroll smiled. He had spoken a personal truth. With Rosalia in his memory, Isabel Chubbock was just the kind of girl to fill the gap which had yawned in his conscience of late.

Blanche Allerton looked as pure but as cold as snow, he thought, as he finally went forward, during a recess, to pay his respects to the much talked of and much advertised beauty. The papers had, for a year, contained numerous items anent Blanche's

charms. He had to admit, while he was talking with her, that she was undeniably beautiful and winning. A deep dimple in her left cheek seemed to gather and dispense the waves of fleeting pink chasing one another up and down her face. Her flaxen hair rose from her white neck in natural waves, and a vagrant curl, which the riding had set loose, fluttered with the movement of her fan. Her smile was unaffected and her voice sweet, and although she agreed with everything he said, apparently, he judged, for want of original ideas of her own, still he had a better time than he had expected. What she failed to say, her mother made up. Carroll found Mrs. Allerton infinitely spicy and agreeable. He had committed himself to an early call on the Allertons, also, before leaving.

Shortly after this interview, the Allertons found themselves unexpectedly beside Isabel. Mrs. Allerton had dexterously avoided even recognizing that young lady all the evening.

Isabel turned to Blanche and said unconcernedly, "So sorry about that drive! I think you are very imprudent to be out to-night!"

"O, this is quite different to being exposed an hour or more to a raw outside air," said Mrs. Allerton, "and of course Blanche knew that you would not have been willing to be boxed in an air-tight coupé."

"Yes, I would," said Isabel, with the greatest sweetness, "for the sake of being with Blanche."

Blanche stole her hand into Isabel's, and gave it a little squeeze.

"We have never seen you here on Monday evening before!" said Mrs. Allerton, icily.

"It has been the merest chance," said Isabel, airily. "Of course, I could come with dear Mrs. Saxby often, if I chose, but then I am devoted to papa, and he much prefers Friday. Papa is more exclusive than I am," and Isabel turned toward Mrs. Allerton with a deprecating smile, as if she really could not help herself for not being there oftener on Monday.

Mrs. Allerton was silenced momentarily by her audacity. Did not everyone know that the Monday class was an aristocratic monopoly that defended its privileges and rights armed cap-a-pie? Here was this daughter of a parvenu money manipulator, whose millions as yet were not fixed beyond sudden loss, relegating her to an inferior position.

"You must ask your father to explain the origin and history of the riding-school."

"O, he has done that. I think he is very foolish to own a fifth of the stock in such a changing concern. Papa is very much like Mr. Allerton—so fond of horses that even a riding-school bewitches him. Aren't men funny creatures, Mrs. Allerton? Always having to be amused. Why, if a man's wife dies he has to be amused out of his grief!"

Isabel's lithe frame became convulsed with a laugh that found no other outlet than a silvery giggle.

"Ah, I see Mrs. Saxby coming for me, so I must go. Good-night, Mrs. Allerton. Au revoir, dearest Blanche."

She advanced far enough to prevent Carroll from a second interview with the Allertons.

"I saw all at once that Mrs. Saxby was waiting," she said, glancing toward Rebecca. "And how weary you must be, and just off the steamer this morning. I suppose it is your German strength that keeps you from looking the least bit tired."

She glanced at his great breadth of shoulders admiringly. "One could fancy you a Saxon as well as a Saxby. Here I am, Mrs. Saxby, at last!"

CHAPTER III.

UP-STAIRS, DOWN-STAIRS, IN MY LADY'S CHAMBER.

A STARRY, windy, bitter night in December. Piles of dirty, lava-like snow obstructing gutters and heaped along the side-walks. A fitful, uncanny moan through telegraph wires laid sixty deep past the fronts of somber brown-stone houses. Cold everywhere outside. Warmth from —° to 75° Fahrenheit inside. The complex roar, and sudden, momentary hush of street life from the Battery to the park. Life barely existent in many tenement-house districts; aggressively active in the nerve-ganglia of hotel centers; æsthetically progressive in mansions with Queen Anne exteriors, French chateau fronts looming suddenly from prosaic flagged side-walks, or square, semi-Florentine lower stories, brightened by windows and doors resplendent with stained glass ornate enough to tempt mediæval ecclesiastical iconoclasts. Poverty and wealth outside, elbowing each other from river to river. Inside, poverty in enforced seclusion between clammy, filth-stained

walls; wealth luxuriating beside open fires, underneath painted, or mahogany ribbed or tapestry hung ceilings. Two worlds—as near and yet as far apart as the places whence the wind cometh and whither it goeth.

A spirit of reluctance to coming face to face with misery we cannot help, and, from that universal propensity to at least see and hear the best and brightest and most beguiling, let us turn our backs on the city east of Third and west of Seventh avenues, leave politicians, the homeless rich, the demi-monde and theater-goers in and near the hotels, and, unbidden and unsuspected, enter the Saxby home, which is one of the largest, the newest, and the most elaborate of the mansions near the park.

Carroll had been home now two weeks, long enough for the glamor of absence to wear off, and for the thousand and one shades of character which family relations reveal to assert themselves as aggressively in the son as they were wont to do in the father.

John had spent money lavishly and unquestioningly upon Carroll till he was "through," but, like many another self-made man, as soon as "finis" was appended to these years of study and travel, he had expected to see indications of infallible and immediate greatness.

Carroll had no ambitions that commended themselves to his father. To frequent the clubs, to drive with his mother, to spend an hour or two a day in the library, and to make a study of yachts with a view to having one built were his chief aims.

He was the only son. There was already an almost fabulous fortune accumulated. By and by he would marry, have an establishment of his own, live like a gentleman of leisure,—such men were sadly wanting in America,—and take care of what his father had amassed. In the course of time, perhaps he would write a book on a scientific subject he had in mind if no one got ahead of him in the meanwhile

Father and son were seated in the library reading, each rather uncomfortably conscious of the other. John's ruddy countenance was irritable, as he looked from time to time at the scholarly, but nonchalant and irresolute profile opposite.

Carroll was reading an article by Sir Lelpel Giffen, on America, and thinking that the English lord's views were unfortunately only too true.

After awhile, Mr. Saxby got up and began to pace the floor, his arms folded behind his back, his eyes uplifted to the ceiling ribbed into square compartments by oak beams, each compartment containing a delicate fresco. His feet luxuriated in the soft pile of the golden brown Wilton. He was perfectly satisfied with the frieze surmounting the brown walls;

the Greek chorus singers dancing there, hand in hand, in low relief, stirred some vague sense of harmony in his business soul. At all events, the frieze had been copied from a ruin in Greece, and must be the "correct thing." The oaken chairs were hand-carved. The great oak center table had been made to order. The low book-cases with their soft brown plush hangings on bright brass rails were stored with the classics. The portraits of himself and his wife, painted by Huntingdon, showed, well relieved, against the brown walls. Plush hangings in the same subdued, warm color, brightened with maroon bands adorned a huge bay window and the doors. A couple of hickory logs burned steadily in the deep fire-place, above which towered an ornately carved oak mantel with all manner of recesses which Tiffany had filled "suitably for a library." Nothing was wanting, and, since the fiat had gone forth from architect, upholsterer, and decorative art critic that the room was finished, it had remained finished to John Saxby's entire satisfaction.

That was a wholesome quality of his prosaic, honest, ostentatious nature, that what was once his remained *in statu quo* and unceasingly dear as time rolled on. His wife could rest perfectly sure that, with each added year, her beauty would enhance and her virtues increase to her husband, for—she was his wife.

Carroll furtively watched his father, noting what he inwardly termed the money-making temperament, as he studied the aggressive front, keen, shrewd blue eyes, firmly set, complacent mouth, and sturdy, dogmatic stride.

If Carroll had only been a bona fide genius, the father reflected, he would have had nothing to say. He wanted a son whom he could not only be proud of himself, but whom other fathers down-town would envy. There was a quality about this boy up-town, that often set him in the back-ground. When his son was talking, John—his love of being heard and being first getting the better of his politeness—might break in and raise his voice and increase his authoritative tone, and interject, "Now *I* think," "*I* am convinced," and "Will you listen to me!" in vain. Men and women nodded and smiled at him in an aside, but continued to listen to Carroll. John had felt once or twice during the past fortnight, that while it was he who gave the dinners, it was Carroll who was considered the host. But the next day he roared louder than usual down-town, brought Rebecca a new jewel or vase, and, altogether, spent a mint of money. No hostility existed between father and son as yet, although they were very critical of each other. John would have suffered as great a sense of deprivation and loss of importance if Carroll had left his roof while a bachelor as he would if he

had gotten up some fine morning and found that his entire parlor floor had disappeared. After all, there were lots of English lords very much such men as Carroll.

"Carroll, you ought to get married."

"There is no such thing as 'ought' without opportunity."

"Goodness gracious! Opportunity!" said John, leaning his elbow dangerously near a royal Dresden vase on one of the book cases, and contracting his round, florid brow. "There is Mrs. Hawley Thornbed—handsome, without relations, thirty thousand a year, and a widow at twenty-one."

"She is too much of a Rubens."

"She is said to look like your mother!" said John warmly.

"Come now, father. Leave mother out of the discussion, or I won't say another word."

John pulled his vest down aggressively. Swallowing a desire to expatiate on Mrs. Saxby's charms, he said, "You are old enough, Carroll."

Carroll rose from his chair, saying, as he stretched his arms out with a sleepy yawn, "How w uld you like me to marry Miss Isabel?"

"Don't you dare!" John faced him squarely.

"Or Miss Allerton."

"You know very well what I would say to such a marriage. I would do something very handsome

for you, Carroll. Nothing would please your mother better."

"She is to be considered," said Carroll, whose affection for his mother was deep. Then, laughing good-naturedly, he said, "Time enough after I am thirty; good-night."

Mrs. Saxby's sitting-room was in th extension and over the dining-room. It was spacious, sunny, and elegant. But on this winter night, the curtains were drawn to shut out the suspicion of a draft, the gas blazed in the chandelier, a mellow light streamed over a little table drawn up near the grate from an amber-shaded duplex burner, and on either side of this table, their slippered feet stretched out on the fender, sat Rebecca and Madeline, engaged in earnest conversation.

Mrs. Saxby looked as though she might have been one of the superb paintings in the ceiling medallions at Versailles, endued with life and transplanted to a New York mansion.

A dressing-gown of white cashmere with facings of lavender silk was loosely tied around her full form and parted over an embroidered petticoat, revealing two small feet, looking still smaller in black silk stockings that fitted like a glove. Her plump, dimpled white hands were ablaze with jewels—diamonds, emitting blue lights, a ruby set with pearls, a great gold snake with emerald eyes, that

coiled around one finger from knuckle to knuckle. Huge solitaires sparkled in her ears. The silver pins in her auburn hair caught the light. Her soft, reddish-brown eyes, so rare and yet so beautiful, and too often, but not always, fitted to a character like that of Phillip II. of Escurial fame, beamed kindly and affectionately beneath lids whose long lashes curled upward and gave an alert, frank expression to an otherwise heavy face. The white, double chin merged into a full, round throat that had a rich, ivory fairness. The thin, arched nose indicated the curving upper lip that rested sweetly into the full roundness of the lower one, and betrayed pride, generosity and amiability. John Saxby's wife was truly very handsome.

"I want to stay, Rebecca. You entertain so much, though, that I am sorely afraid that there would be times when my lack of interest in society, as well as the awkward circumstances of my past history, might embarrass you. As far as you and I are concerned, nothing of course could be pleasanter."

She clasped her hands loosely in her lap. A slightly anxious, questioning expression subdued her features, and she gazed into the fire till the heat and light suddenly suffused her eyes with tears.

"I really want you to spend the winter with me, Madeline, very, very much. These other matters

you mention wouldn't affect John and me in the least. John and I are strong enough to stand by you socially."

"I am not thinking of myself at all, Rebecca. I have no social ambitions. I wish I had. Of course, much of this ostracism will disappear like magic, when my marriage is announced. My fear is that, till then, I shall embarrass you when I come in contact with people who have hurt me, and who will try to do so again. If you and John won't suffer vicariously for me, I'll stay. I would like to stay—till I am married."

"That is a dear, good Madeline." Rebecca dropped from her low chair, leaned her face against Madeline's, and kissed her.

Madeline had keenly realized since her return that she was one of those women on whom society, feeling that it had been over kind in the beginning, intended to revenge itself by showing no mercy in the conclusion. Society, on its part, would not allow her her old place, and, on hers, she had not the slightest desire to resume a position that depended so little on personal value.

You have seen some frail, beautiful object tossed out upon the ocean. There it rocks with the caprices of the waves, bending, gliding, leaping, app rently breasting with ease the topmost crest, the da ling of water, wind and sunshine. Then, suddenly, some

unseen, unfelt force below the sunlight and the wind, perhaps the momentum gained from all these joys of the past, lifts up a green and watery wall with a white crest like the froth of an angry mouth, and down goes that tiny, daring, happy thing, water-soaked and broken beyond remedy. The world, in short, said that Mrs. Winchester had suffered such a shipwreck. Madeline did not feel herself in this sorry plight. She felt that she had indeed gone down into a grave, but there are resurrections of which the merely social world knows nothing.

There was a handful of friends, however, whom change, misfortune, even absence, that worst of all enemies to the warmth of our general affections, now that Madeline showed herself companionable, could not shake off. These became suddenly tenfold dearer from force of contrast with the great army who had forgotten her.

She presented a strong contrast to Rebecca. Her figure, while tall and rounded, gave an impression of extreme fragility. Her hands had an irregular outline and strength of grasp, indicating immense emotional vitality. The blue veins stood up occasionally on those hands and made a network of azure filaments on the wrists. Her fingers were destitute of rings. Even her wedding ring was absent. Her abundant, iron gray hair, parted, and rolled back on either side of her temples with flexible, wavy fullness,

revealed her rather square forehead softened by straight, delicate brows. A sparkling, hazel eye, a fair and colorless skin, a large mouth whose expression altered with every change of thought, but was very sweet and strong withal, made her more than merely handsome, and suggested that strength of will and enthusiasm of temperament which lighten every discouragement. Her face, in repose, wore the gravity which accompanies bitter experiences, however buoyantly or bravely they may have been borne.

After Madeline had gone to her own room, and when Mr. and Mrs. Saxby, pleased with both themselves and the world, had fallen asleep, a bright light still burned in the cavernous depths of the basement, where kitchen, laundry, drying-rooms and servants' rooms stretched out in endless length, for Jasper, and Aurora the cook, who was also his wife, were just settling down to a cozy review of the "goings on" up-stairs during the day. What Wall street was to Mr. Saxby, and her social world to Mrs. Saxby, "up-stairs" was to Jasper and Aurora.

Jasper, black enough to be funereally stylish, was as well matched to Aurora in color as were Mrs. Saxby's carriage horses. These two worthies sat opposite each other in front of the kitchen range, whose red-hot surface and open dampers gave no indication of "shutting up."

Aurora's straight-backed Boston rocker, ornamented with a silk tidy in crazy work design, had for its immediate back-ground the huge copper hot water boiler, burnished till its resplendent color cast a swarthy glow across her broad, hanging, dusky cheeks, and paled the yellow of the great gold hoops in her ears. Vast in proportions, straight as an arrow, a gay red and blue bandanna twisted like a towering crown over her crinkled locks, a long, full white apron covering her capacious lap, plain gold rings, as many in number as Mrs. Saxby's more ornate ones, circling her ebon fingers, Aurora rocked slowly and looked at Jasper with a kind of inflexible attention, much as if he were her daily paper, while he gave her his tid-bits of gossip.

She might have been called the commentator on the acts of the Saxbys.

"We's wid a pow'ful nice family, Rora; no use talkin'—we is!"

Jasper stuck one fist in the other, and closed his thick lips together with a fac-simile of the dogmatic, complacent smile of his master.

"Toe be shore, taint like de place we come from; but den agin, dey aint bin billionaires long enough toe git stingy. Dey do mighty onstylish tings sometimes, an' never know it, nuther. But, on de hull, Rora, I b'lieve we'd better 'cide toe stay wid de new marsr an' misstiss anuder year."

"We aint never bin axed yit to stay a year. I like seasons better, Jasper, anyway. I likes de independence of a month's notice on boff sides. White folks aint like black folks. No trustin' em! Deys so mighty chang'ble. Dey like Spitz dogs. Better always be a watchin' fur hydraphoby. Den you aint tuk by supprise. So long's Mrs. Saxby stays out'n de kitchen, an' pays me thirty dollars a month, an' 'lows me a scullian, an' axes no questions bout my comin's an' goin's, an' keeps me warm, I aint got no fault to find wid her. But, doe she got good 'nough antecedens, he haint none—no more'n dat yaller maid up stairs. I'd be black or I'd be white!" Aurora rocked more rapidly and rolled her small black eyes under her ebon fleshy brows, till the whites shone.

"Wall, yaller girls is one ob de lingerin' effecs ob de paternal conflic' 'tween de Norf an' de Souff. We mus' 'low dem time ter die out, an' be considerate while dey is a doin' of it. De new wis'tor aint brought no maid, but my, Rora! What a step she have! High an' soft an' glidin', all in one. She do look mighty fine comin' down dat broad staircase. She be a madame I'd like to call my missus. No pore white trash 'bout her. I'd like to stan' behind her chair jes to have her look at me out'n dose bird-like starry eyes wid a second's glance when she gib an order. She mighty stylish an' imposin'."

"What she wear?"

"Dere you has me, Rora. Nuthin' oncommon. She wear herself mighty fine. She mek yo tink dat close is quite onnessary."

"What she have on to-day?" said Aurora with grave persistency.

"Lem'me tink."

Jasper covered his face with his hands, his deep, pink nails as carefully paired and mooned as if they were his chief occupation. "Now I kin allers tell you widout tinkin', you knows I kin, Rora, what Miss Saxby wears; but dis Miss Winchester, dat's her name, anyway—ole Virginny name, I reckon—I *tink* she wear black. Yes," cogitatively, "she do wear black."

"Wid crape?"

"I don' know," said Jasper despairingly.

"Wall, you be observin'. Me down here a glowerin' an' a blinkin' over pots an' cookin' all day long. An you right dere 'mong folks, an' no news wuth listenen' toe. What yore elephant ears foe, but listenen'? What dose saucer eyes o' yourn foe but seein'? I'll sarve up-stairs ter-morrer, an' yoe kin doe de cookin'. What dey say 'bout young Mars Saxby comin' back from Europe? De yaller girl say she never see sich airs, not sense she wuz born, as dat young man has."

"Dey aint sed nuffin' of great account when I bin widin hearin' distance, dat I know. His ma tink

him de angel Gabril, but his pa don' tink him an angel at all. I did'n hear dat, but I seed it, tro de pantry door. What yoe tink o' my sassers now?"

"When Miss Saxby gwine give dat lunch party yoe bin 'ticipatin since Christmas?"

"Nex' week. An' Rora, she say toe me, she do, 'I b'lieve I got a cook who kin do some tings better'n Pinard or Maresi.'"

"I reckin I kin. An' I reckin dat Italy man'd make a heap o' money out'n some o' my dishes. But I s'pose, arter all, doe she like wimmin's cookin' cause it got a nateral taste, when de time come she'll tek dem furrin mixters cose dey luks so mysterous, an' gib you a little moe praise'n usial fur yoe wife. Whan a missus does a extra heap o' praisin', she either wants suffin out'n de bargin, or she mighty onsatisfied wid her cook. I knows 'em."

"Pears toe me, Rora, honey, you'se tired out."

"Pears to me, Jasper, you'd better go to bed. You'se a nigger wid a uncommon heap o' sense sometimes, but it do desart yoe whenever yoe have a real good chance to aggravate a wife who'd like toe be proud of you. Go to bed, Jasper, an' git up right side foremost in de mornin'."

"When you a comin', Rora?"

"When I git ready. I isn't sleepy. I'se toe discouraged wid yoe toe tink of sleep dis hour yit."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHUBBOCK RECEPTION.

THE day for the reception arrived. It was clear and cold and brilliant, as behooved the tenth of January. The entire Chubbock household was astir at an unprecedentedly early hour.

Even Posey, having caught a spirit of upheaval and special decoration, had gone to bed, for the first time in her life, with her straight bang in curl papers, and had awakened with a feeling of such cranial degeneration that she vowed never to be so silly again. Isabel laughed at her for her pains, since she was not to be seen. But there is a period in a girl's life when the fairest thing on earth to her is herself; the waving bang that appeared on Posey's round forehead would have been ample reward for her trouble if only her head had not ached. There were two things that Posey could not endure—physical pain and physical exertion. So at breakfast she was so cross that all the sisters let fly their arrows at her expense, and ended by making a perfect little fury of her.

Isabel awoke executive. Well did the servants understand this frame of mind.

Maud and Annie repaired to the library, and walked about with that uncertain, dissatisfied air that a hen has when she goes out on a raw winter morning to glean an uncertain nibble. Why they allowed themselves to be so dominated they did not know; and yet, when Isabel suddenly dashed into the room with one of Klunder's men to plan the floral decoration, they sprang asunder, much as two peaceful fowls do who have been cawing in bleak solitude, when some lordly rooster with head at one side and wing trailing on the ground, suddenly invades their conversation.

Patty was wandering around aimlessly, apparently, but she was laying the Chubbock history now here, now there, trying to find a place where it would meet the attention of guests, unobtrusively, as it were, but irresistibly.

Jeannette was calling first from one room and then another, "Girls, I want to ask you something; girls. we have no time to lose; girls, here comes Sopsy, the upholsterer."

"Girls, girls, girls!" said Isabel, at last, in vexation. "Do stop saying that horrid word, Jeannette, and call the one you want. Annie and Maud are no use. Posey is in a pout, and Patty is sentimentalizing over the Chubbock history. Look at her eyes.

She won't be fit for a thing for the next hour, but a lunatic asylum. What is it you want, Jeannette?"

"I want a hundred things. All these people are here to tear up the house, and there is no one to help me."

"Well, I'm here."

"Where do you think those potted pink azaleas should go?"

"O, they are placed already on the library mantel," said Isabel contemptuously. "The daisies go next, and a bank of smilax, mosses, and ferns make an edge. The palms will stand in the fire-place. I planned that before I went to sleep last night. Klunder's men are arranging it now."

"I am sure, Maud and Annie, that you ought to be satisfied with this background," said Jeannette, with sovereign graciousness.

"I'd rather have a row of dandelion and choose them myself," said Maud.

Isabel turned from surveying the floral decoration, glared at Maud, and then beckoned to Sopsy, who, with red face and distended veins, was trying to push a heavy cabinet to the door.

"Wait a second for help. You will scrape the carving, if you don't take care. Here, Munson, take hold. We shall make you responsible, Mr. Sopsy, for any breakage or damage."

The upholsterer stopped his straining an instant, glanced at Isabel with timid obedience while mop-

ping his face, and said pantingly, "Yes, Miss." The Chubbock moving was a new order, and poor Sopsy was almost wrenching his meager little body asunder to get as much work into an hour as possible.

The cook now appeared in the drawing-room, casting furtive glances at the belongings of the floor above her own as one might imagine some humble spirit suddenly transported to heaven would examine its splendor.

"Please, Miss," addressing Isabel, "there is a lot of men, mum, down-stairs, come to set out the dishes, and to arrange fur the service. They say, mum, they be Mazzetti's men."

"O, yes," said Isabel, hurrying down the basement stairs, the fat cook slowly waddling after. Down the long hall she sped. She threw open the door of the laundry.

"See if this will do. You can use the tubs as tables. The kitchen tables can be brought in, too."

"This 'ill do, ma'am. Can we lay our things out right away?"

"Yes, right away. Send for Miss Isabel," she ordered, on leaving, "if you are in doubt about anything. I will be up stairs." She did not propose that any one but herself should attend to Mazzetti.

Half way up the stairs, she met Sopsy and Munson with a huge, carved table of solid oak careening over their heads.

"There goes a corner into the wall paper, c-a-r-e-ful!" in the tones of a commander.

"Was this light-footed, imperial piece of humanity everywhere?" Sopsy wondered.

Isabel looked back. The front basement doors were closed. She flew down, opened them, and stood inside till the precious table was on terra firma.

"Don't let any two pieces touch each other, Mr. Sopsy. I shall examine everyone myself, to see if there are any injuries. Go about your own work, now, Munson, and let Mr. Sopsy's men help. Everything goes in here, Mr. Sopsy."

"Yes, Miss." Sopsy bowed almost double.

"Isabel," called Jeannette, in stifled tones.

"Well?" said Isabel, as she reached the head of the stairs. "What now?"

"Do go in and settle Maud and Annie. They have been growling and grumbling in the bay window, till I can't stand it any longer."

Isabel looked at Jeannette with a toss of her head.

"'Pears to me, Jeannette, I ought to have been born the eldest. Come along. Has Patty recovered her senses yet?"

She marched toward the bay window where a low, dissatisfied murmur crept out from behind the heavy curtains. She parted the curtains abruptly. "What is the matter now, girls?"

For answer, Maud and Annie kept their eyes riveted on a black cat sitting curled in a soft ball on a sunny part of the fence.

"What is the matter, girls?" repeated Isabel with *empressement.*

"We're imposed on, Annie and I, that's what's the matter!" said Maud, turning suddenly around.

"What do you want now?" Isabel's tones were severe. Jeannette stood in the back-ground, looking anxiously on.

"I suppose Jeannette sent you here," said Maud cornfully, looking straight over Isabel at Jeannette.

"Jennette attends to her own affairs as I do to mine. We do not go about like a pair of matched horses. Now do tell me what this grumbling is all about."

"We think it is real mean, and only an excuse to get us out of the way, for Jeannette and Patty not to be willing to have us in the drawing-room. They could stand in front of the mantel, and we could be between the front windows."

"Where would Fannie Bell, and Florence Dewey, and Grace Trollope stand?"

"O, all around," said Maud indifferently.

"No, they couldn't! Now see here, Maud. Do listen to reason. You and Annie and Patty and Jeannette have noses as much alike as if they were cut out of the same mould. Your voices are *just* alike. You all have light hair and colorless skins. You all measure five feet, three. Now, consider," continued Isabel, warming. "Suppose it should happen that four different gentlemen should say the same thing to you at the same time. There are only a certain number of regulation speeches. You four sisters would all reply in concert, with the same smile and the same inclination of the head. I have seen it often enough at the table, goodness knows, for me to wish for our common good that we were melted down or condensed into one Chubbock. Then there would be some hopes of a personality. Now don't spoil the reception, girls!" Her voice had become as soft as velvet, and as pleading as the last final strain of an organ nocturne.

Maud appeared somewhat impressed with the calamity threatened, and, looking first at Isabel and then at Jeannette while her brow was clearing with a final volley like a departing thunder-storm, she said:

"Well, it is the last time, anyway!"

The house was finally metamorphosed.

The sisters walked from room to room, singly or in pairs, taking a last, lingering, satisfied look.

Isabel surveyed the large table decked with handsome napery and all those nondescript pyramids, and cake and nugat bric-a-brac which are supposed essential to ornate fashionable life. She was pleased with everything, from the bonbons to the highly polished floor. She liked the large spaces made by the removal of much of the furniture. She liked the heavy perfume laden air, the drawn shades and the lighted lamps. As she walked through the long, wide, old-fashioned hall, its tesselated marble softened by elegant rugs, the wide space at the rear end embowered in palms for the musicians, she could already hear the orchestra which a couple of hours later would be in full blast. She could hear the murmur of myriad voices in the great rooms, the sweep and rustle of skirts on the staircase. It was all so delightful that, even at this last minute before dressing, she could not refrain from delicious soliloquizing.

"There, I shall stand. Here, perhaps, Carroll Saxby. And there Mrs. Allerton, mad with chagrin, when she sees Carroll preferring me to Blanche. For he shall!" said Isabel aloud.

"Isabel, Isabel!" called Patty. "Sanderson is ready to dress your hair. Come quickly."

She ran up-stairs. All the sisters were in one room, variously distributed between Jeannette's maid, who was the champion coiffeur, and the manicure, who

was at present dressing Maud's nails and attending to the softening process with Annie and Patty.

"Let me see your nails, Jeannette. Morgan has finished yours, I suppose."

Jeannette held up both hands in triumph, displaying ten long, shell-like nails which were certainly triumphant proofs of digital helplessness.

"Look at mine," said Isabel. "I did them myself."

"I should never have the patience," yawned Jeannette. "How do you keep from breaking them when they are so long?"

"That is my secret. No, I will tell you. I had little horn caps made to slip over my fingers when I am fussing around. If you had used your eyes, you might have seen them repeatedly. They came home two weeks ago."

"That is an excellent idea, Miss," said Morgan, admiringly. She felt that Isabel ought to have belonged to the trade. "Shall you take out a patent, Miss Isabel?"

"No, I will give the invention to you, Morgan. Perhaps you will make your fortune."

"Who knows!" said the manicure, thoughtfully.

One by one, the sisters were dressed and wended their way down-stairs.

The musicians came, and entered upon their duties. At the first burst of sound, Isabel's slippered foot

beat the floor in happy time. Guests began to arrive. "Poor Annie and Maud," thought Isabel, "if I were they and wanted to, I would slip into the drawing-room at the auspicious moment, and who could say me nay. But they will have enough people soon, and such a hot room, too. It always gets so hot." She opened her fan of white ostrich feathers, and swayed it lazily. She liked the transitory solitude preceding the rush to her domain.

Her reveries were interrupted by a lone intruder, a monolithic mass of adipose and gourmandism who strayed into her sanctum and gazed around.

"Ah, Mr. Cheops, how pleased I am to extend a welcome to you first."

Mr. Cheops' pendulous jaw dropped into a senile smile. He spread one fat, freckled, wrinkled hand across his immense white waistband, bowed to Isabel, and said, "I came especially to see you," but he kept his eyes fixed on the table.

A tall, spidery waiter advanced, whose swallow tails looked like wings that might any minute carry him aloft. His cadaverous cheeks and solemn eyes were in humorous contrast to the septuagenarian deposits of Mr. Cheops. He held a tray extended, which bore a rich salad.

Mr. Cheops' throat trembled anticipatorily, as he took it.

"Poor lamb, he is at rest!" thought Isabel, and turned around and looked down the suite of rooms. She was fully conscious of the perspective she must fill from the opposite end. Her dark blue silk dress cut low in the neck revealed a lovely base for the slender column of her round throat, around which fitted a single string of large pearls. Into the velvety lobe of each ear was screwed a diamond. Her hair was a mass of fluffy curls piled high above her forehead.

People were coming now in a continuous stream. Mr. Cheops would soon have plenty of company.

There is Miss Polly van Fleet. Yes, she sees Isabel right away, and makes her way with just the merest handshake for Maud and Annie to the dining-room, when she immediately whispers to Isabel:

"You look perfectly lovely. Aren't you glad to be off here alone? I think you might have asked me to receive with you."

Isabel tapped Polly's cheek with her fan. "Stay by me, if you like."

"O, that is out of the question—now. Three receptions, then dinner at the Allertons, and the theater after."

"Do the Allertons have a dinner party to-night?" asked Isabel, a little quickly.

"Yes, a small one. Papa won't go to large ones, you know. Just the Saxbys and ourselves."

"Mrs. Winchester, too?"

"Not she! Mrs. Allerton was telling mamma that it was like ducking under water for apples to get rid of Mrs. Winchester and not offend Mrs. Saxby. That heroine is in Boston for a fortnight. So Mrs. Allerton seized her opportunity. They say Mrs. Winchester is the handsomest woman that has dropped down into New York in an age. I haven't seen her."

"I have, and I consider her absolutely plain. She might better have stayed in Europe."

"By the way, have you met Carroll?" asked Polly.

"Yes."

"Improved, isn't he. Positively overwhelming with that grand German manner. He is said to resemble the Grand Duke of Baden. Everybody takes it for granted that he is to make love to Blanche." Polly's eyes contracted slightly, for she had just come from Mrs. Kittredge's.

"Mrs. Allerton would be dreadfully disappointed if he did not, I suppose. I think she has educated Blanche for Carroll."

"Well, it would be highly suitable all around. I'd set my cap, if I thought it would be any use. Look at Mr. Cheops," and Polly nodded to the bay window, where he had now seated himself with a variegated ice, which he was contemplating fondly.

"It takes all kinds to make the world, dear, and of course we want the ices eaten."

"Mr. Cheops will do it," said Polly. "Well, good-by, darling."

"Stop a minute," and Isabel seized a button on Polly's waist. "Whom are you going to hear this evening?"

"I am going to *see* Adah Rehan. I want to study her costumes. I have been buying a new dress. After the theater, we go to Delmonico's. Now, I must go." Polly whisked into the hall, then upstairs for her wraps, and was out of the house just ten minutes after she had entered.

As Polly left, a half dozen came into Isabel's room at once. Presently it was full.

Then she forgot the future in entertaining, for she was soon encircled by young men, each with a plate in his hand. The gustatory process conduces wonderfully to thought with a certain class of people. To be sure, what might be called a low order of ideas in the realm of pure thought, grows out of oysters, bouillon, *pâté de fois gras* and other delectables that are eaten en route, so to speak. Their filmy texture serves at leàst to cover the mental vacuum that might otherwise be revealed.

The violins wailed and warbled alternately in the hall. The flowers sent out richer and richer perfumes as the air became warmer. Débutantes' cheeks and

eyes sparkled with more than youthful brilliancy, as they sipped champagne, ate rum punches, or drank black coffee. Everywhere was a constantly changing rush and pack of people, till even Maud and Annie had had enough attention to satisfy their longings. The silk and velvet trains that covered the aching feet and ankles of the sisters, as the hours passed away, were the envy and admiration of many. The fine old house never looked handsomer. Flowers, music and refreshments were all of the choicest. Servants and waiters were as noiseless as French clocks. The street outside, from avenue to avenue, was packed with liveried carriages. Beggars and vagrants lingered around the awning covering the front stoop, whenever the street watchman momentarily ceased his vigilance. Reporters sent by Mr. Chubbock, incognito, were busy taking mental notes of this magnificent expression of his last corner in bread-stuffs. In and about that roomy old mansion reigned a carnival of plenty.

By six o'clock, the afternoon throng had waned and almost vanished.

Isabel sank into an arm-chair, and, extending to the utmost her two little feet in their high-heeled slippers, winced over the shooting, stinging pains. "A cup of strong coffee, Munson—clear! O, Patty, my head is ready to split. But it's a great success, isn't it. How many do you think were here?"

"Everybody, I guess," said Patty, laconically. "I feel as if I should faint. Bring me a glass of champagne, Munson."

"Why do you take champagne, Patty? You know it always goes to your head. It will give you a red nose for this evening."

"I don't care. I've got to take something. I'm just about dead. I wish it were over. Three mortal hours this evening!"

"O, you will feel as bright as a button two hours hence."

"Munson, where are you?" said Jeannette, sauntering wearily in, as the last guest departed. "Tell cook to make me a cup of strong green tea. Well, Isabel, how do you think it went off? Are *you* satisfied?"

"Perfectly, so far," said Isabel judicially. "See here!" she whispered. "Half a column in the Sunday Centaur. I wrote it myself, and gave it to the Centaur reporter. He beamed on me. Saved him a lot of trouble, you know. You won't recognize yourself when you see what nice things I said about you."

Jeannette brightened perceptibly.

Annie and Maud now joined the conclave, each with a glass of crushed ice, with which they were cooling their parched throats.

"You make me think of Dives, girls," said Isabel.

"Hush, Isabel, you're wicked."

"Don't preach, Patty. Did the Chou-de-bec book get any attention?"

Patty nodded affirmatively. "Mrs. Beunik Higgins read it for ten minutes. I guess she will open her eyes."

"Do you think she would never have suspected the dignity without the book, Patty! Ha, ha!"

"She is too obtuse to suspect anything, unless it is down in black and white."

"It saves her many a sleepless night, then," said Isabel, sagely. "Now while we are resting, let us make out the list of all whom we want mentioned in The Golden Fleece. Sidney Harrows has promised me a whole column. Papa would be awfully disappointed after all the expense, if we weren't extensively noticed."

While Isabel and her sisters are recuperating in anticipation of the evening reception, let us repair to the Allerton mansion, where dinner is about to be served.

The van Vleets are there—Polly, her parents and brother, and the three Saxbys, also. The doors have not been opened yet between the drawing and the dining-room, but the animated, informal hum of conversation makes us feel in no present hurry for anything further than listening and observing.

Blanche looks as fair as an Ophelia in her white surah gown, which is relieved sufficiently with gold

braid to separate its softness from her rounded neck and arms that have no other ornament than slender bands of turquoise. The shell-like contour of her ears has never been marred by earrings. As she stands now, talking to Tom van Vleet, with the blue silk draperies of one of the windows for a back-ground, she is infinitely more beautiful than any of the numerous statues of modern feminine beauty in the Luxembourg. Carroll Saxby thinks so, at least, as he sits on a divan just opposite, apparently ears and eyes for Polly alone, but all the time trying to hold before his mind two faces—Blanche's in its cold, almost severe beauty, and Rosalia's with a constant change of color and expression. Girls like Blanche have faces that abide in the memory; girls like Rosalia have power of presence.

Carroll could shut his eyes and see Blanche. He could only think of something ever varying, when he tried to visualize Rosalia.

He felt a selfish regret that he had met Rosalia.

One downward step, though it leaves a mildew in its track that can never be effaced, does not benumb the moral faculties to the extent that it hardens. As Carroll looked at Blanche he realized that she was a woman whom he might easily be tempted to try to make his wife; but, with Rosalia in the back-ground, he felt more comfortable in Isabel's society. With a woman like Isabel, even if a man had reservations in fact, it was perfectly justifiable to suppose that she had reservations in possibility. She was one of those intellectually clever girls who never feel till after they have thought. No mad excess of ecstatic feeling,

either of love or hate, disturbs the flow of their ceaseless calculations. Cleverness of this sort, allied with sensuousness, often makes a more fascinating compound in its social expression, than the torrid glow of fires that lie deeply buried.

"Are you glad to be at home again?" asked Polly.

"I have not been back long enough to judge. So far I find it very diverting."

"I never thought of judging home relations from the stand-point of diversion. That seems merely incidental, no matter how much there may be of it."

"I am afraid I have come back a German. My practical tastes are ultra material, no matter how attenuated and idealistic my theories."

"I shall have to stop and translate your long words before I say anything further. There is the butler, and I am glad to see him. I have been at three receptions, and I didn't even take a cup of bouillon at one; hadn't time if I came here to dinner.

"I believe, Miss Polly, I am to take you out. I feel awfully honored, but jealous of Tom, since he seems to be preferred to me by Miss Blanche."

"Wait till you see where your seat is. I'll wager you will be placed opposite Blanche where you can feast on her charms. Did you ever see a more statuesque beauty?"

"She is certainly a lovely picture."

"She is far more than that, after you know her. She has a rather slow mind, but a fine open character that nothing can spoil. She is as wholesome and sweet as she looks."

"You don't mean to insinuate that she is dull."

"Not a bit of it. She is all that she looks, but only some great occasion will bring her out. I believe it is her modesty that makes her so cold and still."

"I don't think she looks cold. She looks—she looks—well—unaroused. It is a clumsy word, but it expresses my meaning."

"I understand," said Polly, with a satisfied nod. "Yes, here you are, just where I said you would be."

The table was a round one, so that everybody was at a vantage point for observation.

Mrs. Allerton glanced at the circle complacently. She felt that it was in harmony with her room, her china, and her station.

It happens over and over to the most fastidious or aspiring American hostess, that her table presents a congeries of disagreeable personalities that throws a highly reflected light on the evolution of our higher social statics fashionably considered.

Women have an inborn faculty which, aided by a little favorable opportunity, enables them to keep their stage secrets hidden. One must, therefore, always study the men of a family, was a proposition that Mrs. Allerton had deduced, if one wants to know the degree of refinement it has reached. She immensely admired the Saxby men in one particular, although, if she had spoken her inmost thought, she would have said that she disliked them in many others. But, for two generations, the Saxby men had married women in a better social position than

their own, and of unquestionably fine family antecedents, so far as that can be predicated in America.

No woman could have looked more superb than did Rebecca, her gracious, kindly presence full of sweetness and amiability. Her rounded cheeks had an almost girlish freshness. Her finely shaped eyes, benevolent and dignified, had a liquid softness that was unusual. Had it not been for what Rebecca had brought to John, both in herself and her social position, it is doubtful whether Mrs. Allerton could have decided on the Saxby money for Blanche any sooner than she could on that of the Chubbocks, for which she had an unconquerable aversion. Everything about the Chubbocks seemed wholly and unutterably vulgar to her; their house, their carriages, their entertainments, were as defiling to her aristocratic convictions as the sacrifices in the temple, which, while holy to the high priest, were nevertheless unclean to an Essene. She smiled at the presumption which kept Jeannette and Patty unmarried because they aspired to the same exclusiveness as she. "The line must be drawn somewhere," said Mrs. Allerton firmly to Rebecca, once, in conversation, "and I draw it at the Chubbocks and others like them." Mrs. Allerton amused Rebecca and even excited her wonder. She could not imagine such a savage grip on something of which she had always been assured. Nothing was valuable to Rebecca, except what she considered valuable herself. So, because Isabel amused her, she gave the girl both opportunities and her intimate social indorsement. Mrs. Allerton

judged everything not only from her own standpoint, but from the value put upon it by others. Her tabulated social logarithms were sufficient for the most intricate social problem.

John Saxby, with the same kind of worldly knowledge that Mrs. Allerton possessed, was not unmindful of Rebecca's social value to him; but no man ever loved a woman more undeniably for herself alone, than he did his wife. Rebecca's gentle nature found a resting-place in his strength, his honesty, his pugnacity, and that shrewd business capacity which attracts some women in the same way that intellectual superiority does others.

John was ostentatious to vulgarity occasionally, but this Rebecca checked, and he admired her for it, as his taste was actually better than his propensity. He also had the great good sense, when Carroll was a small boy, to defer to Rebecca in whatever pertained to the child's social culture. So, though Carroll had the appearance and, remotely, the manner of the Saxbys, he was what might have been called a highly refined and developed specimen.

Has refinement a demoralizing and depleting influence on natures intended to be aggressive and rough?

Here was Carroll, certainly, though university-bred, with no fondness for business and no ambition for a profession.

Even Mrs. Allerton was sufficiently American to believe gentlemanly idleness, though it be that of an English lord, dangerously demoralizing. Still, such are the contradictions in human nature, she would

have been more than glad to have Blanche marry the most vagrantly idle lord that England possesses.

None of these deep-sea soundings were carried on during the dinner; they were but the conditions on which such a dinner party depended.

"I understand, Mr. Saxby," said Mr. Allerton, who was a man that looked as though he had been sitting all his life for his portrait as president of the United States, "that you are going to let your last Whistler be exhibited at the Union League."

"Yes, I am. I want to send it away for a time, in order to be able to catch the impression once more. I have looked at it so long, that now I see nothing but an even, black surface. It makes me nervous to be always looking at it, now here, now there, to grasp its meaning, as if the focus of my eyes were distended."

"Why do you buy such pictures, Mr. Saxby?" asked Polly.

"I don't buy them," said John, in frank disgust. "It is all the doings of my collector. He persuaded me to make a collection of Whistlers, but, now that I have gotten together a dozen or more, I have about decided to give them to the Metropolitan Museum."

"You had better commission me to select your pictures, father; I think our tastes would agree pretty nearly."

"You are fit for something better, my son," said John, good humoredly. "I can no more imagine a man following such a calling than I could fancy—well, fancy myself making sponge cakes for the Woman's Exchange. Of course, if I had to be a baker, I would try to be a good one."

"It must require much skill as well as culture," said Blanche firmly, "to select pictures judiciously. I shall be very glad when more of our young men devote their attention to callings not connected so directly with the making of money."

"Money is a commodity whose value it sounds well to be ignorant of; but it is an indispensable requirement, even for the collection of pictures," declared John.

"I can conceive bare walls preferable to pictures bought with some money," said Blanche.

"The Chubbock money, I suppose you mean, my dear," said Mrs. Allerton. "But really the Chubbocks are very good people in their place."

Blanche looked distressed. "I had no thought of being personal, mamma."

"Well," said Tom, "although I should wish to pursue something more directly professional than collecting pictures, if I were a professional man, still, I do think that, until we New Yorkers reach a point where money and money making are less in our thought, no matter how much we may accumulate, we are really in a very low stage of social refinement. How seldom you see a man or woman with that fine unconsciousness of material surroundings which I will denominate kingly or queenly, for want of a better word. We shall not be highly civilized until the first question is about the man and not about his belongings. I don't care how much money a man has, the more the better, if only it is the thing of least value in the world to him."

"You can't think of a man without including his belongings. And wait till you have failed once or twice, Tom," said John, "and then you will find that you are unable to live such heroics. A woman may, whose father and husband have never suffered reverses. But this is a bit of unworldliness we allow in women." He glanced fondly at Rebecca.

"Unworldliness that is the result of ignorance has no moral value, has it, Mr. Saxby?" asked Blanche.

"There, that is one of the speeches Blanche can make," said Polly, touching Carroll.

"A speech that takes me by surprise, coming from an Allerton. They have always been so judicious in their worldly wisdom and their piety both."

"Blanche represents a reaction," said Polly warmly.

Carroll was not in the mood to hear lofty sentiments from Blanche or from anybody. He wanted the excusing atmosphere of medium levels to feel at ease with her, and he admired her beauty to that extent that he wanted to dally with his opportunities with her with the same freedom that he felt with Isabel. If only this Greek had the Chubbock versatility and superficiality, thought Carroll.

There had been nothing flattering in Blanche's manner to him, after a few meetings, and this happened in spite of herself. She could partially trust a girl like Isabel, because she partly understood her; but to a man, back from a long absence abroad, toward whom she felt an accumulating mistrust, she could give absolutely nothing but reserve. Her reserve was like the chilling of an ice-berg. It bore

down into an otherwise warm atmosphere with great coldness.

Mrs. Allerton, who understood her daughter's moods perfectly, perceived this coldness at dinner, and could scarcely conceal her irritation.

After dinner Carroll sought Blanche with a piqued curiosity. Although he read her feeling, he wished to disabuse his mind of an impression so uncomplimentary, for his wounded Saxby vanity made him very ill at ease with himself. It had seemed to him that each time that he met Blanche, her hauteur grew.

His attentions, since his return, had been so very general, that perhaps she resented it; especially, as he had to admit to himself, he had certainly made opportunities to see Isabel. She might possibly think that he had studied to be indifferent to her. If this were so, he would repair the breach. If she did not like him—why—but he refused to entertain this opinion about any woman. He had the good sense, however, to seldom betray this exalted estimate of himself.

"I am feeling in a very aggravated frame of mind, Miss Allerton."

"I should never have surmised it."

"I am. When we accepted Mrs. Allerton's invitation to dinner I had planned a long evening with you, if you would have allowed it, but now, as our engagements stand, we must leave unconscionably early on account of the Chubbock reception. Father promised Mr. Chubbock that we should all be there."

She looked kindly at him, as she said, "I am sorry, Mr. Saxby, for I feel as though you and I had to begin our acquaintance over. Before you came back I did not think so, but we have both changed, radically, I presume. I find it impossible to connect you, as you are, with my memory of you."

"Your remarks may be very complimentary or very uncomplimentary. How am I to understand them?" asked Carroll laughingly.

"O, you must be your own interpreter," she replied, archly.

"Then I shall immediately conclude, for some inscrutable reason, that I have fallen in your good graces. What can I do?"

"If you have fallen because of an inscrutable reason, there is nothing for you to do."

"You ought to act the part of the goddess of truth to me."

"Do you remember that statue of her in St. Peters that represents her as so haggard and withered? I am afraid a young man could not learn lessons from such a forbidding goddess."

"If she were clothed in a form as lovely as Ayeshah's and appeared immortal, what then?"

"We never can see the whole truth. She is therefore rightly personated subject to deformities. If we did see it, under existing conditions, we would be as miserable as the hero in George Eliot's 'The Lifted Veil.'"

"Do you not think it our duty, then, to believe the very best possible of everyone?"

"The possible is so different with each one of us," said Blanche, gravely. She sat with her eyes cast down, looking as fair as a woman could look, with the light shining on her flaxen hair, which waved back from either temple to a low knot pierced with a gold arrow. She felt as if she were under an impulsion.

Carroll felt momentarily serious and abashed. The story of Una, as given in Comus, flitted through his mind. He was paying an involuntary tribute to beauty and goodness. He could fancy Blanche as Iphegenia holding a listening ear to catch the faintest whisperings of the oracles. Certainly she was a very different order of girl from Isabel, and yet, while he took an esthetic pleasure in her great beauty, and paid her the highest homage of respect a man can show a woman, he felt suddenly impatient to go to Isabel, and to leave his acquaintance with Blanche to take its natural course.

"If I could—if I knew what would please you, I would make a confession of faith," he said, finally, in a nonchalant manner.

Her vague sense of responsibility suddenly left her. She looked up and laughed merrily; and then they drifted into commonplaces which kept them chatting for a half hour. Then Carroll rose to go, for Rebecca had already gone up-stairs, and Blanche rose also.

"I wish we had waited till this evening to go to the reception," she said. "I always enjoy seeing Isabel in the evening."

"Do you admire her?" asked Carroll earnestly.

"Sometimes, immensely. She is the cleverest girl, certainly, that I know."

"She rather interests me."

"As a matter of course. She interests everybody. Her naturalness and audacity amount to inspirations."

"Why do not other girls break their bars?"

"Isabel has simply never been caged. We who have, wouldn't know how if we tried to fly in such a large space."

"I shouldn't think the mothers would like Isabel."

Blanche looked up, taken by surprise. Her eyes told how nearly Carroll had touched the truth. Then she rallied and said valiantly:

"That doesn't necessarily argue against Isabel. It may take more time than most mothers can give to understand such a girl. I like her."

Carroll shook hands rather more warmly than he had intended to a minute before. "May I call on you soon?"

"O, yes." Blanche bowed prettily.

When the last guest was gone, Mrs. Allerton drew her daughter to her. She was too stout and too stiffly encased in black satin, to make the embrace more than temporary, and Blanche felt glad to be released. "How did you enjoy Carroll?"

"I don't understand him," said Blanche, musingly.

"Why, there is nothing special to understand. He is his father over, with Mrs. Saxby's refinement. An excellent combination!"

"Do you think so?" asked Blanche negatively.

Have you experimented with house plants enough, dear reader, to realize what a forcing process a little ammonia effects? A young plant will assume a sudden rich greenness and increase in size, but seldom bloom. A stand of plants treated in this way will unfold marvels of beauty in a short time. The amateur gardener is often so delighted with these quick results, however, that he does not proportion his ammonia water to the quantity and quality of the soil, and the decay is as quick as the bloom, and is accompanied by a parasitic life that hastens the destruction.

At seven o'clock the Chubbock sisters were utterly wilted, cross, and discouraged. At eight o'clock, what with the orchestra playing dulcet strains behind the palms, the flowers in the stately suite of rooms renewed, electric lights and soft colored lamps shedding brilliance everywhere, and nerves stimulated with coffee, tea or champagne, the eyes of the hostesses were as bright, their smiles as constant, and their animation as unflagging as if they had been resting all their lives for this epochal hour.

Four hundred guests streamed in and out of the handsome rooms; men of all professions, businesses and trades, from the college president to the judge, from the wholesale pork dealer to the wholesale land dealer, from the celebrated minister who flashed in and out of such assemblies among his fold and planned on the way home homilies on the "Golden Calf" which he never preached, to the acolyte who entered with reverential air in order to learn to feel at home in the palaces of those to whom in the order

of Providence he might be called to serve; brokers, speculators, commission merchants; gamblers who, with other cards than those of *rouge et noir*, changed the poor man's treasury of bread-stuffs from New York to Chicago, or cornered it in transmuted values in secret granaries of London and Paris; lottery proprietors, whose lives were chiefly spent in drawing-room coaches speeding from Maine to Texas, or from ocean to ocean, giving chances on minerals, water-courses, ranches, and unborn towns, and sitting like national vampires in their changing homes, to rake the golden spoils in from all directions. As Monte Carlo is to the world, so was the Chubbock parlor that night to scores of men on whose skill in games of chance the despair of thousands depended. Like the Spider of the "Escurial," from whose web stretched wires affecting the destinies of Europe, so Timothy Chubbock stood beside Jeannette and Patty, smiling on the victims whom he meant to entangle to-morrow, and measuring the success of his gigantic "deals" by the presence of men in his parlors whom nothing but an anxious fear of bankruptcy would have induced to cross his threshold. No matter, they were there. They paid their tribute money to father and daughters in that social respect as dear to the parvenu as a throne would be to a royal bastard.

As the throngs stopped coming, but while laughter and conversation, music and wine were at their height, Timothy passed through his sumptuous rooms ostensibly to exchange a word here and there with a guest, but really to see what Isabel was

doing. His opaque, brown eyes gave a dull scintillation as he beheld this one child of his heart surrounded by young men and old, some with their faces flushed and only too ready to break into laughter; others, with a curious, speculative wondering stare at this audacious girl who said whatever she chose with the daintiness and reserve of a convent-bred girl, and then, in sudden, evanescent flashes, had such an abandon and allurement that one might have supposed her a Greuze portrait suddenly endowed with life. Timothy noted Carroll Saxby, his back half turned to the room, one arm resting on a cabinet, a wine glass partially emptied in his left hand. He stood a little apart, but within the circle, a distinguished, foreign looking young man, with a heavy lower face, but a square, open, manly brow. His clear blue eyes paid Isabel an involuntary tribute of amazed fascination.

If in manner, look, or accent she had been once ill-bred, the charm would have vanished.

The drawing-room stage, though wholly melodramatic, and never giving opportunity for the acting of an entire play, is admirable for benefit entertainments.

Every nerve and muscle of Isabel's lithe body and mobile face were called into requisition.

There is a clever little insect called the "devil's-darning-needle" whose motions are fascinating to the youngest and the oldest. Observe it on a mid-summer day, poising its symmetrical body in the warm air, its gauzy wings outspread, its antennæ feeling in every direction. It darts hither and thither. Watch

its gyrations and sudden but graceful plunges as long as you may, you can never calculate its next movement, or guess its final lodgment.

Thus Carroll watched Isabel.

Why did this slight girl waste such an immense amount of vitality on such listeners? Was she so full of nerve force and emotional impulse that these pyrotechnics were a necessity? If once he had caught a conscious glance, or heard a word that might by any means be intended for him, his vanity and indifference would have increased together. But however personal her attention could be when they were alone, there was no one more impersonal and yet agreeable, as soon as she appeared to be politely free to make her attentions general.

She already knew that she influenced Carroll, and that he was brilliant, shallow and vain. She had a useful memory, and the added faculty of assorting her mental wares and drawing on them instantly at need. So, when Carroll occasionally attempted learned flights, she flew her kite amazingly near his. Try as he would, he could not discover whether her stores of knowledge were like the goods of an impecunious shop-keeper, making a fine exterior display, but concealing many empty drawers and shelves, or whether she was that rarest of all women, with decided intellectual talent and resources and a fine, social art. Resist her as he would, he found himself hopelessly believing in her, believing in her many-sidedness.

Dilate as we may on domestic virtues,—and for staying powers they are undeniably the greatest,—

still we seek one diversion in and pay one most honeyed tribute to traits and accomplishments with which these have nothing to do.

Carroll drew a little nearer, just as Mr. Chubbock reached the group. The father lowered Isabel's artistic value, for his presence was so insignificant that nothing but an indomitable pugnacity would have ever led him to try to make a figure in society. Isabel was his as his stocks were, as the room they were in was, and Timothy placed himself beside her and communicated this impression. She slipped her hand within his arm. He certainly needed other plumage than his own; that she never failed to perceive. For the little time he was absent from Jeannette and Patty, she felt able to cover him with her feathers.

Her movement was unexpectedly childlike.

"It seems, papa, that I have said something severe, and I want you to defend me Mr. Brownell accounts for the growth of democratic ideas in England by saying that we have proved in our country that wealth, refinement, scholarship—was there anything else, Mr. Brownell? Oh, yes; esthetic perception and morality—can just as well be the resultant of one generation as many. I replied that such a combination from one or many generations was as rare in any country, even in one individual, as the appearance of the phœnix in Egypt, and would certainly portend a new era. I thought it was the universal belief in New York that superior excellence was conclusive proof of insanity. This is an age of

balance,—so much evil for so much good,—now is it not, papa?"

Isabel slipped her hand out. "Papa will discuss the question with you, gentlemen."

She wound in and out of several groups, leaving Mr. Chubbock with what he considered a mortally heavy task, and which broke up the conversation as soon as she left, as she had intended to do, and finally came out by the door whither Carroll presently approached.

"You have been so surrounded, Miss Isabel, that I have not had a chance to say a word to you."

"I expected something more original from you, Mr. Saxby. I am sure you can soar above platitudes."

"If I could be alone a half hour with you, I might." He was always thinking how delightful it would be to be alone with Isabel.

"I am certainly often alone," she said demurely; then to save the awkwardness which would follow from such unexpected naïveté, "alone, though surrounded with people. In this house, with such a family, aloneness, prosaically considered, is out of the question. Do you not enjoy being an only son?"

"I have taken it so entirely for granted that I have never thought anything of it. It is a state which is said to be very conducive to selfishness."

"Selfishness is universal, no matter what the conditions, or people would not make the accusation so constantly. I am sure it is desirable to be selfish comfortably, if possible."

"Then you admit it as a necessary evil."

"I believe in it as a cardinal virtue. If you will think a minute, you will find that it is the so-called unselfish people who are always in trouble, and that it is the selfish ones who help them out in the right way by doing just as little as possible."

Isabel looked very soft and gentle while enumerating such hard doctrine. Her words pleased Carroll in themselves, although he took it for granted that she was sparring, for he chose more and more to consider her the reverse of many of her speeches. How useless it is for Truth to show herself to us, unless she neutralizes the vision by a half disguise.

"I am afraid the air is full of discussion, Mr. Saxby, and I do not know of anything more incongruous at a reception. So let us postpone this heavy subject. You dined at Mrs. Allerton's to-night, did you not?"

"Yes, I did," said Carroll, rather spasmodically.

"I am sure you enjoyed yourself there. The Allerton dinners are famous, good and long. Did you have a nice time?"

"Yes, of course. It is nicer here, however."

"Thanks." She dipped her face into her fan an instant. "Blanche will be the belle this winter. Every one takes it for granted. She is certainly beautiful." Isabel made this last remark as if it were a dependent clause.

"O, she is undeniably beautiful. Does she know much?"

"I have never examined her," said Isabel gravely.

"Such knowledge comes without examination. I like a responsive nature."

"Blanche is never that. Responsiveness is not knowledge."

"They may go together."

"I am surprised that, after having been in Germany so long, you should desire women to know much."

"German women often know a great deal, but they never assert their knowledge."

"It may be that way with Blanche."

"She would better be American then, when the advantage is on her side. Drawing people out is like sucking honey from a honeysuckle. You would rather go without, after a little effort."

"We shall get into a discussion again, so let's part. There is Mrs. Bilbo scowling at me. Do go talk to her daughter. You see how unselfish I can be." Isabel withdrew with her sweetest smile into which she threw a vague regret.

An hour later, when all the guests were gone, the lights in the lower stories extinguished, and weary servants and drowsy daughters preparing for that one interval of the day when human beings are all little children alike, in committing themselves in perfect helplessness to sleep, Isabel reviewed the evening with satisfaction. "I shall be the first of the Chubbock sisters married yet," she murmured, as she turned on her pillow to settle herself to sleep. "Poor Jeannette and Patty! Poor Maud and An—" A heavy sigh, the first draught of that refreshing potion, slumber, broke off the last word.

CHAPTER V.

A RIDE IN THE PARK.

On his way home Carroll had a rather humiliating sense of the elasticity of his affections. The picture of Rosalia as he had seen her last, leaning against the great walnut tree on the promenade in Interlachen, was growing conveniently vague and picturesque. She looked so round and well cared for that he did not doubt but that she was really better off than she would have been had he tried to raise her above her position. Although her expression was heart-broken, and although he could not conceal, even from his vanity, that he had added moral cowardice to other traits as mean, nevertheless, all this was in a dark back-ground that no one would take the trouble to peer into, and which, after all, made the setting of many lives that eventually become fair. Student days and Rosalia were both of the past.

Having disposed of Rosalia, Isabel and Blanche rose before him. He was in the vortex of Isabel's attraction; but then, there was that array of Chubbock sisters and Chubbock *père*, all alarmingly like Isabel and without her distinguishing qualities of brilliancy and adaptability which would render her triumphant anywhere, if left quite alone. If only the whole family, except Isabel, could be obliterated!

But, since he had convalesced so comfortably after leaving Rosalia, on grounds of expediency doubtless he could learn an equally comfortable indifference to Isabel, if he made a little effort. Affection was transitory. Like all other men, and women too, he judged absolutely from his own level. Thus it is that one man's heaven is another man's purgatory, and sometimes the lowest hell of misery to still another.

There was Blanche. What a harmonious picture, complete in every detail! Home, dress, and parents made an environment that would always give suitable scenic effect. And Blanche herself? She would never do the wrong thing, or, at all events, look the wrong thing. A connection with the Allertons was not to be despised. It was in the natural order of things that he must marry suitably, and Blanche was at the disposal of her parents. These white, still, indifferent girls always did as they were told. He knew by those untranslatable nothings which, however, make a man bold, that Mrs. Allerton's mind was the same as his father's; and John Saxby's chief present danger was in disgusting Carroll with Blanche by always sounding her praises. Still, Blanche was undeniably the best speculation. Was not marriage a lottery? He decided to ask her to ride with him the next day. She was admirable on a horse. Certainly he would spare no effort with himself to fix his choice on Blanche. And Isabel? Well, she could wait. She could be picked up at any time.

While Carroll was filled with these judicious reflections, Blanche, who had retired, but had been unable to sleep because of a long conversation with her mother on the complex motives that should influence a girl in marrying, had risen from her bed and gone to the window to look out, to try to dissipate the fog of troubled thought that assailed her.

This question of whom she should marry lay like a nightmare on her soul. Why need she ever marry? As for Carroll Saxby, she did not believe in him. He was handsome and rich, but vain. She found this last quality intolerable in a man.

She had a mortified sense of being in the same category with her father's fine horses—a piece of property to be sold to the highest bidder, and appraised according to her physical charms.

She sighed deeply, and wished she were little and plain, and so dull that even the few accomplishments she had would have been an impossible acquisition. She did not want anyone to marry her because she was beautiful, or because she was a good amateur actress, or because she was Chauncey Allerton's daughter. "I don't know a man that I care to marry. O, dear! I wish Uncle Mark were back. Perhaps he could help me," and she crept back into bed.

The next morning at breakfast Carroll's note, asking her to ride with him at four, arrived.

Mrs. Allerton's gray pompadour, surmounted by its bit of lace and pink ribbons, swayed dramatically as she said, "Of course you will go, my dear."

"I suppose so," said Blanche, wearily, "but I don't want to go one bit."

"My dear!" and Mrs. Allerton opened her eyes reprovingly.

"I don't. I fancied Carroll would come home from Germany and his travels much more of a man than others in our set. He doesn't compare with Tom van Vleet, and, on the whole, displeases me. There is something frivolous about him."

"I never heard that word applied to a man before. It is just his foreign manner with young ladies. Your papa thinks him quite wonderful. He is really an authority on horses."

"So is our farmer on chickens," said Blanche loftily.

"You are never pretty, Blanche, when you are ill-tempered. I had just this kind of aversion to your dear father, in the beginning. To me it is the best sign in the world that you and Carroll are suited to each other."

"Mamma, you do have such a bold way of putting things. You take it entirely for granted that Carroll Saxby intends to marry me, and that I have nothing whatever to do in the matter. I have always been obedient to you," said Blanche, her voice quivering, "but I will not marry simply to please you or because a man is rich. I would rather live and die an old maid."

"Will you answer this note, or shall I?" said Mrs. Allerton severely.

"I will," said Blanche, with a trace of fright in her voice, which this tone from Mrs. Allerton invariably produced, strive as she would against it.

At four o'clock promptly the horses were at the door, and Blanche went leisurely down the stoop, her skirt held up with one hand, a riding whip in the other, and as fair a vision of loveliness as her mother could desire. The groom mounted her, and then, Carroll, springing into his saddle, led the way for a few paces, until Blanche's horse quickened its steps, when they rode off together.

Mrs. Allerton stood behind the curtains in the bay window of her drawing-room, watching them till they were out of sight, the complacent satisfaction on her face betraying both her expectation and her desire.

The winter had set in so late that, although the first snow had fallen, the routes for equestrians in the park were still in fair order. The exhilarating air and exercise by the time they reached the east entrance had brought the color to Blanche's cheeks, and she looked almost etherially beautiful. Carroll was thoughtful and dignified. Blanche liked him

better when he was still. She felt like her usual gentle and placable self as they cantered toward the west side.

It would be a foolish thing to say that she was not willing to ride and be seen with Carroll. It pleased her very well, indeed, if matters could have ended there. She liked to receive her share of the attention of this young man who, at present, was the most popular one in her set. She liked his carefully groomed and superbly formed horse. She liked, so to speak, Carroll's own appointment of person and appearance, just as she usually innocently enjoyed her own beauty and surroundings. To be as luxuriously bred as Blanche had been meant to require and expect all these extraneous comforts and appurtenances as much as wholesome air and healthful food. So, when they met Isabel and Posey, presently, in a jaunty Russian sleigh well set off by long tassels, with a funereal groom behind them, and Munson's plethoric magnitude in front, Blanche bowed with more than usual sweetness, and on the whole girlishly exulted in the fine figure that she and Carroll made.

Isabel bowed brightly too, as Carroll tipped his hat with studied reverence, and, truth must be told, he would have thrown his caution and diplomacy to the winds then and there if, by so doing, he could have been in that cozy sleigh beside Isabel.

Their roads diverged almost immediately.

"Munson," said Isabel, as she watched the retreating figures, "keep on up the west side."

Meanwhile, the keen, crisp air, and their ever increasing pleasure in the exercise, put them both in a high flow of spirits, and, during an occasional walk when their horses came close enough together to permit of conversation, Carroll exerted himself to the utmost to be agreeable.

Somehow she forgot that she had thought him either weak or vain. There was no trace of these characteristics in what he said or looked. He was simply reflecting her own personality, so far as he could judge of it, and that, to the weakest and strongest of us all, is pleasant, if it be genuine and unintentional.

It was after one of these lapses into conversation that they came upon a long, straight stretch of road under a line of evergreens.

"Shall we have a gallop?" Carroll asked.

Blanche nodded, and off they sped.

Faster and faster the horses went. Keener and more exhilarating the frosty air became, cutting their faces and making their blood glow, as they dashed on. Side by side they kept, the muffled thud of the horses' hoofs on the snow making a staccato to the low rustling of the wind in the trees. The sky was so blue; the vista, up the sweep of road they were traversing, so intensely clear. Their horses and they seemed to be one. It was exhilarating and delightful beyond description.

Carroll glanced at Blanche, to see if she were tired. She smiled radiantly at him, and they kept on. He thought her beyond all comparison the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

They came to one of the bridges spanning the road for equestrians. While they were galloping under it, Isabel's sleigh was crossing it. Then the two roads, after leaving the bridge, made a wide curve side by side.

Whether it was the sudden dash of the sleigh over the bridge, or the bright red plumes breaking upon the startled vision of her excited horse, no one knew, but the spirited creature suddenly became unmanageable, and, in Blanche's effort to control it too quickly, it galloped across the sward to the drive.

"Stop, Munson, stop!" cried Isabel, imperiously.

The sudden halting of the sleigh still further excited the frightened animal, and, in a second, as it seemed to all, it had dashed against the Chubbock roans, and the next instant its rider was hurled against a pine.

She lay motionless, her blue skirt stretched out on the patch of snow under the tree—her face downward.

Carroll seemed momentarily paralyzed, but Isabel sprang out, and, rushing to Blanche, sat down beside her, lifting the pretty head into her lap.

"She is dreadfully cut! Poor Blanche!" said Isabel, solemnly.

"Is she dead?" asked Posey, in tremulous fright.

"No, oh, no!" said Isabel in genuine dismay, "but her beauty is ruined! Blanche, it is I; don't you know me?" she asked, presently, when Blanche feebly opened her eyes.

Blanche tried to speak, but her mouth worked helplessly.

"Here, Munson! Help Mr. Saxby lift Miss Allerton into the sleigh beside me. There, there, Blanche," said Isabel, tenderly putting her arm around her half fainting companion. "We will be as gentle as possible. Can you lean against me—so? Give me your veil, Posey."

Half supported by Isabel, and half by the high back of the sleigh, Blanche sat weak and moaning, but resolute to be taken home at once.

"We can wait for an ambulance," said Carroll. "We could get one from the Presbyterian hospital in a few minutes."

The wounded girl waved her hand negatively.

Thus Isabel drove with Blanche in the park, but in a very different way than she had expected.

As the sleigh glided over the smoothly packed snow, and Carroll cantered after, both he and Isabel

were making a number of quick and characteristic calculations that were not necessarily uncomplimentary to poor Blanche.

While feeling sorry for the friend whom all the time she was pressing gently against her, Isabel was reflecting that this accident, however slight it might prove, would shut Blanche up for several weeks, and that her own opportunities with Carroll would be proportionately increased. Why should she not make the most of this precious time? Carroll was not engaged to Blanche. Blanche would have abundant offers that would, on the whole, suit her just as well. And then, without a word having been said on the subject, she knew that worldly wisdom took Carroll to Blanche and away from her. Yes, the chance was a fair one, and she would be a fool not to profit by it. Having thus made up her mind, she gave Blanche a series of additional squeezings and asked her how she felt.

Although Blanche articulated something, Isabel could not understand. "Never mind, dear," she said soothingly. "Do not try to speak."

Carroll looked down at the two figures before him, and felt that cowardly sense of freedom a pleasure-loving nature indulges in when a barrier, whether fancied or real, is removed between policy and mere inclination. If Blanche were disfigured, that fact, of course, put an end to any possibility of an alliance with the Allertons. Although Isabel was not the only other young lady in the world, still he cherished the thought of her with great satisfaction. He smiled, unconsciously, over the deftness and practicality with which she had assisted Blanche. There had been kindness and promptness, but not a trace of sentiment. Would Isabel be like that with him if he lay sick or helpless? No, if he read her aright, what deep sentiment she had would well over only to one person. He pictured the delightfulness of tender

words and tender looks from this bright creature, all warmth and glow and sweetness for him alone.

Thus it happened that when Blanche reached home, Isabel and Carroll could hardly wait to pay their proper respects and give the necessary explanation to Mrs. Allerton, whose love in this crisis, I am glad to say, absorbed all minor considerations.

In the interval while Blanche was being assisted up-stairs, Carroll asked Isabel if she would be at home that evening, and, being answered in the affirmative, he said a little tenderly, "May I come down for an hour or two?"

"O, yes, do come. I shall be so lonely. The others are going with papa to the theater."

One of those audible pauses followed, during which Carroll was content to look at Isabel, and she was delighted to be observed.

Mrs. Allerton's maid came down-stairs to thank them in her stead for their attentions, and to say that she hoped her daughter was not seriously hurt.

"Give my love to Mrs. Allerton, Judith, and so much love and sympathy to Miss Blanche."

"Say to Mrs. Allerton, if you please," said Carroll, "that I will call this evening to inquire after Miss Blanche."

Isabel gave him an odd little, furtive look, which he saw and for which he was glad. He would enjoy watching her if she were jealous.

"I suppose we had better go," said Isabel.

Judith stood with folded hands and a manner which plainly told Isabel that certainly nothing more was expected of her.

"I believe Blanche's jaw is broken," she said, as they went slowly down the stoop together, "and if it is, just like as not Mrs. Allerton will think that in some way we are responsible."

"You might just as easily have been injured as Miss Allerton," said Carroll, with undue warmth, seeing that Isabel was safe and sound.

"That is very true," she said, pensively.

He assisted her into her sleigh, stood a second till she drove off, and then mounted his horse in a very gay mood, considering that Blanche had been so hurt while under his escort.



CHAPTER VI.

A CLIMAX.

AFTER her daughter was in bed, and while waiting for the doctor, Mrs. Allerton had time to reflect on all that had happened.

Blanche's face was certainly horribly bruised. There was an ugly gash in her chin, and her jaw, if not broken, was dislocated.

This mother, who had looked upon her daughter's beauty as enduring as life, fell into a state of absolute, unreasoning dismay. She was overwhelmed by what she conceived her own misfortune. She attributed the accident wholly to Isabel. "The little vixen!" she exclaimed, wrathfully. "I believe she tried to frighten the horse."

Blanche looked distressed at this accusation and shook her head as if to say "No."

Mrs. Allerton was unconvinced. "You may be sure that she will make the most possible out of your accident to Mr. Saxby. She will pursuade him, if she can, that you are a perfect wreck."

Blanche smiled slightly in spite of her pain. She was in that tired state where the loss of her beauty would make very little difference to her.

"My dear, it will be no smiling matter if you are scarred for life."

At this juncture the doctor entered.

He removed the bandage, looked serious when he saw the cut, and then, gently examining Blanche's mouth,—the poor girl underwent this with great bravery,—he turned away with a sigh of relief and motioned Mrs. Allerton into the adjoining room.

"Her jaw is not broken, as I feared, but is dislocated. That will be all right. But the cut. It may leave a scar, and a long one."

"Is there anything we can do to prevent such a disfigurement," said Mrs. Allerton, clasping her hands.

"In the first place she must not take a breath of cold; but, even then, I cannot tell. Her face is cut to the bone."

Beckoning to Mrs. Allerton warningly, to remain behind, the doctor said cheerfully, as he came back:

"Now, Miss Blanche, we are going to put you under the influence of ether; then in a few minutes, you can talk."

She smiled through her swimming tears.

An hour later when she recovered consciousness, her jaw was set, the ugly wound sewed, and all that was visible of her sweet face looked lovelier than ever.

The doctor's orders were strict that she should not undergo a change of temperature in six weeks. So Mrs. Allerton gave up her winter's social campaign, and sat down before her camp fires to invest the enemy in the shape of a possible scar, with a vigilance that was not to be baffled.

Early in the evening Carroll called.

Mrs. Allerton saw him herself, her smiling face and nonchalant manner implying volumes of good news.

"You will be delighted to hear that my darling Blanche is doing beautifully. The shock has been very great, and she will have to keep her bed for an indefinite time, as the cut on her face requires an even

temperature. The doctor consoles Blanche, though, by telling her that she will be, if possible, more beautiful than ever when she is released. We feared at first that her jaw was broken."

"And it is not?" asked Carroll with eager, present sympathy.

"No, it was dislocated. It has been set successfully. Indeed, the accident, though painful enough, is turning out so much better than I at first feared."

"I am delighted to hear such favorable news. I hope, dear Mrs. Allerton, that you will not hold me responsible, although I feel sadly mortified, and that I have not incurred your daughter's ill-will."

"On the contrary, I entirely exonerate *you*. But Blanche is such an angel that she will not listen to a word against those ubiquitous Chubbocks. I can assure you, Mr. Saxby, they subject themselves to very unpleasant remarks, driving as they do in every direction. Such young girls, too, with only the foot-man and the coachman!"

"Would you tuck a maid in also?" said Carroll, a trifle sarcastically.

"No, what they need is some middle-aged relative who understands girls, to go about with them. I dare say, Mr. Saxby, that with your foreign prejudices, they quite disgust you."

"I find them a very interesting study."

"It is so mortifying to the better class of Americans, though, to have girls who succeed in wedging themselves into good society act so questionably. Mr. Chubbock's speculations the last six years have accomplished wonders for his bevy of daughters. Only, they do not marry." She smiled significantly.

Carroll looked a little uneasy and conscious. He rose to go, shortly. "Give my regards and best wishes for her recovery to Miss Allerton. Please present my apology that this accident should have

happened while she was out with me. I feel very much ashamed," he added, pausing at the door, and looking contrite and handsome.

"O, Blanche will be able to ride with you again by spring, I do not doubt." She bowed affably as he withdrew.

"Now for my ubiquitous little Chubbock," he said to himself, running gaily down the stoop.

What warmth and sumptuousness flashed out upon the night, as the butler threw the hospitable door open. Everything was soft and rich and full of color in this home. He led Carroll to the library where Isabel was alone.

She rose from beside one of those nondescript tables which serve as a focus for a tall lamp. A rose-colored shade covered the globe, and she stood bathed in a pink, transforming halo which heightened her whole expression. No sense of becoming maidenly simplicity deterred her from looking magnificent if she could. Although she wore no other jewels this night than rings, her hands displayed several with unique settings and brilliant stones. Her hands were beautiful, white, plump and delicate, and, like her voice, as soft as velvet. If she had always talked nonsense, it would have been a pleasure to hear her speak; but, as a rule, there was enough wisdom, apparently of the unpremeditated kind, in her remarks to always make one wonder what was coming next.

"How is Blanche?" she inquired, coming straight to the subject of deepest interest. "I presume you have just come from there."

"She is doing capitally. Mrs. Allerton thinks she will be all right in a few weeks."

"I saw the doctor an hour ago," said Isabel dubiously. "We chance to have the same doctor that the Allertons do. He spoke so discouragingly. I suppose he made the best of it to Mrs. Allerton.

Not that he does n't think that Blanche will get well. She is not at all dangerously injured. But her poor face! Posey is ill with a nervous headache, and Doctor Speedwell came directly here after leaving Blanche. So Mrs. Allerton thinks she will be as pretty as ever!"

Isabel sat back and gazed at Carroll in mute sorrow for the inevitable disappointment hanging over the Allertons.

"Let us hope that she will," he said, indifferently, picking up the book that Isabel had been reading. "Ah, Mr. Haggard's 'Jess.' What do you think of it?"

"It is immensely interesting. I have just been re-reading some parts about Jess. The book is a delightful romance, and romance is said to be the crying need of our day. We are so sadly mercantile, they say. Do you think so?"

"Really, how can I tell, never having lived in any other age than my own? I have an idea, though, that the best matter for romances never gets into books. The very best stories can never be told."

"You think, then, that the romantic standard may be true?"

"Something is true, that, whether romantic or not, is absorbingly interesting to the actors, and as improbable to them, before it happens, as it would be to others. Interest and improbability are two of the chief objects in a romance."

"Those are the two chief objects to a gambler. I think the romance depends on the ideal, and that these other points are merely accessory. Take Jess. She loves ——— because he is the only gentleman she has had the opportunity of meeting. She probably could not have loved him if she had been brought up in London. But, loving him, she does so absolutely, with all the powers of the strongest kind of a

nature. Then she turns around and sacrifices herself and her lover for a sister who is certainly not worth it."

"But you think this sacrifice is true to nature?"

"With a girl like Jess?"

Carroll nodded.

She looked at him long and softly, and sinuously shook her head. "No. I think such characters in real life love in a splendidly selfish way. If Jess had been made real, the ideal would have been lowered, and the romance would have been spoiled."

"You may hold this opinion because you have the mercantile spirit of your age."

"I devoutly hope," she said, gently clasping her jeweled hands, "that I may always have the good sense to live in the spirit of my age, whether right or wrong. Comfortable living comes from a just knowledge and application of the subtle relations of one's surroundings."

"What about right living?"

"Right living is harmonious living."

"Your philosophy is Epicurean."

"I do not study abstract theories or live by them. I study people. I find that the most agreeable, good-natured and prosperous are like wind-mills. They adjust themselves to currents. They enjoy everything themselves, and make the material comfort of the theorists. However much the latter scorn their practice, they worship the results. Right and wrong action are wholly relative with the people whom I emulate. I include among them many who are called the best—the salt of the earth." She laughed softly.

Here was indeed a woman before whose tribunal nothing was to be feared—a delightful little nineteenth-century pagan. Rosalia was just where Isabel would have left her had she been a man. If Isabel loved, although she would do so instinctively,

it would be after having satisfied all the nice questions of her judgment, prudence, and common-sense. Then she would give herself up to being as piquant and delicious in this as in everything else. He called her a "little devil" in the recesses of his heart—but with the full understanding that he did not want the society of angels.

She felt, without quite comprehending, a latent timidity in him. His attitude toward her, in the many interviews they had now had, indicated an unwillingness to yield to her attraction which might either result from expediency or a prior claim which she was, however, satisfied did not exist through Blanche. She determined to give fuller rein to those subtle forces by which she held him, and thus lose him altogether or win him speedily. Her years, yes, her months were precious. One winter was all that she could afford for Carroll Saxby. To all intents and purposes she became the suitor. How near Carroll was to being won she little guessed. Such a change of places, under a due regard for existing forms, has brought about a surprising number of marriages.

Carroll stayed late. Isabel's soft voice, her gentle, contained manner, a magnetic charm that invested all she looked and what she implied, winged the minutes and made a back-ground of delightful, possible sweetness, if all this half-reserve should cease.

Their conversation grew more and more personal, while still clothed in purely impersonal language. Then it glided to the plays of the winter.

Isabel, never afraid to criticize anything in the heavens above or the earth below, began to analyze Ellen Terry's "Portia."

"It is superb, because you feel Ellen Terry in it all. This is quite right, until she pleads Antonio's cause. Then her character and style fail, and she betrays her sex."

"See," she said, rising, unpremeditatedly, apparently, "this is the way she speaks and acts."

She stood a moment with graceful abandon, as if surveying the part quickly, and then began, wonderfully like the great actress in a certain quality and elegance of voice and intonation, yet investing the words with such an excess of womanly pleading that Portia's disguise seemed extremely faulty.

"You see, the hearer must feel that it is a woman pleading, after all."

Carroll had risen, while she was reciting, to see her better, and stood leaning against the mantel.

Isabel was such a good actress that she had thrown herself into the part thoroughly, which meant, however, on this occasion, all of herself. When she had finished, the faint glow through her colorless complexion, deepening her gray eyes and softening her lovely mouth, gave her a warmth and sweetness that the young man found irresistible.

They stood gazing at each other an instant, Isabel all unconscious invitation, and Carroll, without ever being able to tell just how it had come about, stepped forward and took her pretty hands in his.

Another instant and she was folded in his arms, and he had given her a kiss, and then another and another.

An hour fled.

As the chimes of Grace church were softly tuning midnight, Carroll was plighting his troth to a delighted and willing pair of ears that drank in all the sweetness of his raptures as matters of course, but hearing far more intently and complacently of the magnificence that should enshrine his future wife.

CHAPTER VII.

VARIOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS.

THERE came a day in March in which the whole *orbs terrarum*, in Mrs. Allerton's limited definition of that comprehensive term, was transformed, and for the worst.

As blessings never come singly, so calamities, in their unwelcome visitations, usually come in large families and with a power of indefinite multiplication. It is true that the greatest misfortunes sometimes prove to be the choicest blessings, and that golden privileges often have a metallic weight that crushes to the earth. But, as everything in this life takes its color absolutely from our present point of view, Mrs. Allerton was to be sincerely pitied for her dismay, as one cherished idol after another fell from its antiquated niche, and, in breaking, revealed itself but a god of clay.

Their family, their position, their wealth, were *faits accomplis*, and were as irrevocable as the many years in which she had complacently enjoyed and appreciated these rights; but rights, as we understand them, never fill the measure of our aspirations. We are so constituted, that we are every one in search of an unknown quantity which when found will be equal to happiness. Through eighteen years she had nurtured, trained and caressed Blanche for a brief reign

of beauty and conquest which would decide the remainder of the child's life and satisfy her own ambition, all to have Blanche ride in the park on the very eve of triumph and ruin her beautiful face. For five long years, ever since Mr. John Saxby had become a member of the Stock Exchange, of the Produce Exchange, and, in short, one of the recognized leading financiers of New York, she had, after mature deliberation, decided that Blanche should marry Carroll, and that what the Saxby millions lacked in prestige, the Allerton family and pride would supplement. Blanche could always have her cards engraved, "Mrs. Carroll Allerton-Saxby."

There is a congealing quality in the assumption of social autocracy which freezes the warmth of the best intentions. Though John and Rebecca coincided with Mrs. Allerton's worldly wisdom, rather too boldly intimated, they did their part so perfunctorily, owing to an undefined but irritating quality in that lady's attitude, that they occasionally wished that Carroll would, independently of them all, describe the arc of his own circle. That was what they had done, and they had never been the worse for it.

When Carroll did this very thing, John's displeasure was of the flinty, unyielding kind, and Rebecca went about her palatial abode in a dumb amazement that obstinately refused to trace relations between cause and effect.

Mrs. Allerton sat as if on a throne of unbending displeasure and scorn in an arm-chair in Blanche's room, declaiming on the well-known business turpitude of Mr. Chubbock, on the monotony and sameness of the sisters, and on Isabel's premeditated villainy toward Blanche.

"But, mamma!" expostulated Blanche, "there was never anything between Carroll and me, and I doubt if there ever would have been."

"You knew the expectations of both families," said Mrs. Allerton severely. "Mrs. Saxby is sick with the shock and the disappointment."

"It is not my fault," said Blanche, meekly. "Although I suppose Carroll understood as well as I did that, in mere extraneous matters, it was desirable for us to marry, still, mamma, I think I know that we both became aware, on the night of the dinner party, of an antagonism."

"That was a fancy, a mere fancy!" Mrs. Allerton waved her hand impatiently.

Blanche privately had a haunting sentiment connected with the pleasantness of the park ride, and wondered herself, if, after all, in time, she might not have learned to love Carroll. Still she was heart-free and young.

If she had been allowed, she would then and there have written a congratulatory letter to Isabel, every word of which would have been honest, in answer to a cooing announcement from that damsel, at which Mrs. Allerton's irate eye was frequently glancing.

While the conversation was going on, broken by long intervals of silence, during which Blanche felt thoroughly uncomfortable and as if she had the weight on her pretty shoulders of being the cause of an awful disappointment to her mother, and in which Mrs. Allerton became entirely unconscious of her surroundings and saw Isabel flaunting the Saxby wealth before her very eyes, Mark was taking a brisk walk down the avenue to add his quota of unpleasant news to his sister's bulletin.

If he had known how inauspicious the day was, he would doubtless have deferred his announcement. So it is that the best work at cross purposes for their own interests as well as those of others.

Mark only felt the exhilaration from the glorious winter day, a serenity and joyousness that covered

even his sister's habitual coldness with such a mantle of suavity that he walked straight into her presence with the courage of a boy who supposes himself able to convince the whole world of the virtue of any hobby he is riding.

How relieved Blanche felt when the butler announced her uncle! If alone, she could dispel that slavish, marketable feeling so many sweet girls are compelled to have, when some matrimonial scheme of which they are the center, has gone wrong. Her luxurious room, her dainty clothing, her cultivated beauty,—and beauty, dear reader, in these days of a complex civilization, has little hope if rustic or unadorned,—what were they worth in her mother's eyes if they did not secure a brilliant marriage? Blanche buried her poor pale face in her hands and cried a little for shame at her helplessness, and wished she were a boy. While she was in this melancholy frame Judith came in with the doctor, who chided her for her discouragement. After a cheery talk on various bright subjects, he said:

"I have a piece of news to tell you."

"Bad news or good news? I would rather not hear it if it is very bad," she said, dolefully.

Dr. Speedwell smiled and said nothing for a full minute; then he slowly enunciated, "It is very good."

"Tell me right away, then."

"There won't be the trace of a scar on your bonny face; only a dimple in the side of your chin which will make you more distractingly pretty than ever. I did not dare tell you till to-day, for fear you would be careless. What do you say to such a piece of news?"

"Well, if it will make mamma happy, it is very good news indeed."

"One more month in the house, and then we will show the world the fairest Easter lily in the city."

Judith hovered about Blanche, adjusting her hair, her shawl, and doing numberless pretty acts for the young mistress who was to come off with such flying colors after all. Servants, like dogs, when they are faithful, are absolute in their devotion. To Judith, the doctor's announcement made an epoch.

Meanwhile, Mark had not been long with his sister before the mercury of his good spirits began to descend until it marked temperate; there, by an effort acquired through years, he kept them. No one in this world should deprive him of the power to view life in a bright, if not a high, light.

He asked dutifully and lovingly about Blanche, inquired if Mr. Allerton were gone down-town, listened with ill-suppressed amusement to her version of Carroll and Isabel's engagement, and could not fail to see that it made an unfavorable prelude for his own avowal. Should he defer it? No, he had come there to tell it, and tell it he would, and have it over with.

He got up and walked the length of the drawing-room, his hands behind him. How had it happened that his sister and he were children of the same parents? There was the indubitable, instinctive, almost unreasonable affection existing between them, considering their long separations and opposite temperaments. There was the family intimacy, which had to continue, if they kept up any intercourse whatever. Would his marriage snap the bond permanently asunder, or would his sister's healthy and hitherto constant affection for him be stronger than her pride? With the thought of Madeline ever in his heart, he was, truth compels me to say, cheerfully prepared for the worst.

"Charlotte," he said, stopping in front of her, and feeling timid through his sympathy for her, as she sat upright with two bright red spots on her usually

white cheeks, and with a desperate, disappointed pride in her cold, blue eyes, "Charlotte, you used to urge me to marry."

"O yes, I used to do so. But, since you became such a Bohemian, Mark, I have learned to think it fortunate that you remained single." Then, as he continued to look at her in a solicitous way, she said, "Have you anything to tell me?"

"I have, Charlotte. I am engaged to marry Mrs. Madeline Winchester."

Mrs. Allerton's whole body settled into a kind of collapse. Her shoulders drooped. She folded one hand over the other with desperate energy. The muscles of her cheeks and chin quivered.

"What next, I wonder!" she finally ejaculated, looking away from him.

"Have you met Mrs. Winchester, since her return, Charlotte?"

"I have had no wish to meet her. I remember what she was, perfectly, and will always be—the wife of a defaulter."

"Charlotte,"—there was a warning in his tone, while it was still kindly,—"Mrs. Winchester's name and all that belongs to her dignity and honor are as sacred to me at this moment as they will be when she becomes my wife. I want to ask one thing of you for my sake. Will you call on her?"

She stared at him for several seconds, then rose to her feet, and, still looking at him, said, "No!"

Mark paused a brief instant, his face white to the lips. Then he turned and walked out of the house.

He retraced his steps up the avenue in a very different mood. True, he had been awkward and precipitate, but he owed it to Madeline not to delay the communication any longer. But he had not felt in such an inward turmoil for years. He walked himself out of this agitation after a while, and then,

once for all, as Madeline had settled the same matter in Interlachen, he dismissed his annoyance permanently from his mind. Feeling neither particularly loving nor angry toward his sister, he left matters to shape their own course.

If contrary winds were blowing in every other direction they did not fail to find out the Chubbock circle, for on the evening of the very day on which these various conversations were occurring, Timothy Chubbock came home late, and, supposing that his daughters had all retired, ordered the house closed and went slowly forward to the library.

Isabel, however, leaning over the banister, saw him enter, for something in his face and manner the last two or three days had awakened her solicitude.

She loved and despised her father at once. Her admiration of his successes did not blind her comprehension of his essential insignificance. A person far less shrewd than Isabel only had to look into his opaque, brown eyes, to see the heavy, pendulous under lip and retreating jaw, the deep creases in his cheeks and neck, to know that cunning, coarseness and suavity combined had been the source of his wealth.

Even bad men turn away in disgust from their sins when they are too suggestively personated. About Timothy Chubbock there was something that vulgarized and minimized his power. If ever he fell in the arena of speculation, the thumbs of merciless fortune hunters would be turned down.

There is never a man, however obtuse apparently, but can read the signs of his own popularity. No one believed more firmly than Timothy that if his corners were disastrously broken, his career would be forever ended.

Isabel remained leaning on the banister a few minutes, thoughtfully listening. Then she softly crept

down-stairs in her slippered feet, glided through the long, dark hall, and peeped in at the library door, which was ajar.

Her father stood on the rug in front of the fire, his back turned to her. In the mirror above the mantel, she studied the reflection of the somber, troubled, heavy face. He was in deep, abstracted, and yet apparently confused thought. Once or twice he passed his hand wearily over his forehead, sighed, and relapsed again into a profound revery. He walked up and down the room irresolutely a few times, and then, suddenly setting his heavy lips together, drew a pistol from his pocket and began examining it.

She pushed the door open, walked in in her long, white wrapper, her blonde hair hanging down her back in a thick braid ready for the night, and faced him.

Neither spoke for a second—an hour, as it seemed to the startled girl. Then she said firmly, "Father, put that pistol down."

He laid the pistol on the mantel.

Going to him, she pressed him gently into a chair, and, sitting down on his knee, put her arm around his shoulder and said, "Now, papa dear, tell me all about it."

There was a marvelous resemblance between them, as they sat there face to face, and the intuitive knowledge which each had of the other made few words necessary at any time between them.

"Well, daughter, if you want to know, the game is up."

"Have you failed?"

"I shall to-morrow, if I live."

"You must live, and you must not fail. What has happened?"

"I have put three millions into wheat which must now be thrown on the market with wheat pouring

into New York in floods from every direction. All that I have is so tied up that I can't avail myself of a cent."

"But, papa, what are three millions to you?" asked Isabel, magnificently.

"They are the bottom cube in a block house which will come tumbling over all our heads if it is drawn out. That is what three millions are to me."

She gazed at him with the earnestness and intentness of a sphynx. "Must it fall right away, papa?"

"With a crash. The evening papers, to-morrow, will be full of it. Good Lord, child, half down-town suspects it, already. We have shorted the market to the last extremity. We have sucked in all the small dealers, and still wheat comes pouring in, as if the seven years of plenty were beginning. To corner it, day by day, we have had to keep making cash payments. Day before yesterday, the Guarantee Bank, which has backed our combination so far, reached its limit. Yesterday, Craven Brothers invested their last penny. To-day, I threw mine into the pool, and wheat closed at two, twelve and a half, only to be followed by the news that a fresh lot would be thrown on the market in the morning. We haven't a cent to buy it with. Our brains, our honor, and our money-bags have been dropped in this mammoth deal to the tune of ten million dollars. Unless a miracle happens we've got to break to-morrow, and no miracle can happen."

"Well, then, papa, I'd break and make another fortune. What you have done once, you can do again."

"I can never do it again. I tell you every nerve has been on the rack for two years, and they won't work. They won't work as they have been doing. If I had been the Timothy Chubbock of five years ago, this would never have happened."

"Haven't you any friends, papa?"

"Friends! I've heard of friendship among thieves, but I have never seen it. My losses will be the gain of somebody else like myself. We don't deal in values, child, down-town; we deal in expectations. Our money swells from losses and not from gains. There will be some new millionaires in New York to-morrow, where there was one called Timothy Chubbock to-day. It is loss, loss, loss, to the multitude, and gain to the few. To-morrow, I join the multitude. I've been a fool, Isabel. You liked your father's money-making power, didn't you? And not much else in him. Well, that's at an end."

She knew that he was hungry for some word of affection from her—for a kiss; but she could not give either just then. What was to become of her? Would Carroll Saxby marry her now? What would the other five girls do? She seemed to see Patty wandering in forlorn pride through the streets, with the Book of Heraldry under her arm, and Maud and Annie in perpetual tears and gloom. For a moment, the pistol seemed a resource for two.

"Papa," she said at length, "tell me soberly whether there will be anything left. Shall we—shall we be rich compared with very poor people?"

"We shall be the poorest of the poor—now do you understand?" and the father, irritated at this judicial calmness and questioning, allowed her to feel that he wanted her to get up.

But she sat still. She had another question. "I thought you settled the house on us girls?"

"So I did. But what is a house like this with nothing to support it? It costs us fifty thousand a year at the rate we have been living."

"Now see here, papa, you are desperate. If you can save the house with what is in it, for us, I'll be Timothy Chubbock, Junior."

The cold, bright gray eyes met the blurred and troubled brown ones; a temporary look of relief settled on the ugly features so like and unlike Isabel's, whose face had sharpened rigidly in this interview and was for the time being momentarily devoid of any latent suggestion of the heaviness and coarseness always so marked in her father's.

"Seal that with a kiss, my girl," said the father, mournfully.

She bent over and kissed him.

They sat and talked into the small hours, Isabel listening with the inherited intelligence and shrewdness of a financier, her father leaning on her attention and companionship with something of the forlorn comfort some men might have taken in a son under like circumstances.

Blanche wept in the morning to be a boy, that she might be forever saved from the despotism of matrimonial schemes. Isabel sat tearless, one small hand clenched into the other, in the darkness, and long after Blanche was asleep, wishing she were a man in order to plunge in and through the maelstrom in which her father had been wrecked. But none of this desperation appeared on the surface while she was in the library.

After a while they relapsed into silence, both looking into the fire, the last embers of which were dying out one by one, fit emblems of the ebb in their fortunes.

"Isabel, why don't you go to bed?" said her father at length.

"I will go, when you do."

"I want to be alone a little while."

"You can't be left alone to-night, papa. To-morrow you will go down-town and face the worst, and then you will come home all right. I must see you through my part of it." She took his hand, lying nerveless ly over the arm of his chair.

He returned her clasp, convulsively.

After another pause he said, a little huskily, "What are we going to do with the other girls, Isabel?"

"Send them into the country the first thing in the morning, to stay until all is settled. And I'll meet what I can, side by side with you, if you will promise me not to take your life.

"You'll do that anyway, child, and I'll try to be a man. But Isabel, there have been intervals, seconds only, when I've lost my mind during the last twenty-four hours. Well, let us go up-stairs. It's gloomy and cold down here. See, the fire is out."

He reached up and turned out the gas, took her hand, and they walked through the dark hall and up the broad stair-case.

"Now, papa, I'll give you just five minutes to get into bed." All the melody and sweetness of her beautiful voice were thrown into these words, all the softness of manner and affection with which a girl, a born actress, could invest them, and Timothy Chubbock, under her influence, felt soothed and calmed as he had not in days.

She went into his room punctually to the second, drew an arm-chair to his bedside, and, sitting down, said, "Now give me your hand, papa dear, and I will watch beside you while you get a little sleep."

"But you—you will be sick to-morrow!"

"No matter about me. You need all your brains for to-morrow. Now try to sleep."

The soft pressure of that magnetic hand, the gentle stroking of the fevered pulse, were like a charm. Never had Isabel shown herself so tender to him before.

He fell asleep all at once. When his heavy breathing told her she had a respite from her watchfulness, she rose, and walked up and down. When the morning

sounds began to break the silence, after dropping the heavy curtains over the windows, she crept into Jeannette's room and wakened her.

Jeannette opened her drowsy lids, and seeing Isabel's intense look and the black rings under her sister's eyes, sat up, and said, "Are you ill, Isabel?"

"No," and then the two girls had a hurried conference, and presently, when Jeannette came in to take Isabel's vigil, the latter went and wakened the other sisters, and executed her intentions so successfully that at eight o'clock all had departed, and she was back in her chair beside her father, as calm as she had been the night before when the blow first struck her.

He wakened presently. Looking at her a long time without speaking, he said, finally, "My girl, you are worth a fortune to any man. Order my breakfast up here, and then go and lie down. I am all right now."

"Are you sure?" She looked at him intently.

"Yes. Last night's sleep will do me a week. I couldn't fire that pistol if I wanted to this morning. As sure as my name is Timothy Chubbock I'll make you an heiress yet. But I've got to go down to the bottom first."

"Now you are the dearest, bravest old popsy that ever lived," said Isabel, ringing for the cook. "The girls are all gone, so you have nothing to fear at home."

CHAPTER VIII.

ISABEL.

THAT afternoon, newsboys all over the city were crying the name of Timothy Chubbock. Some of the papers contained rough wood cuts of the great millionaire which did not enhance the few personal attractions he had. All his family history was paragraphed under the heading: "Marvelous Rise of a Self-made Man."

Poor Patty, cloistered under the shadow of the Adirondacks, read how old New Yorkers remembered the well known and buxom figure of her maternal grandmother who, in the good old times, drew water, in her bare feet, from one of the pottery fountains. All that Patty recalled of this ancestor was her stout proportions encased in the heaviest and richest black silk, her awful dignity, palatial suite of rooms at one of the leading family hotels, and the still awe felt by the sisters because they were commanded to stand in her presence.

During that fatal day, a heavy snow fell.

When her father was gone, Isabel wandered dreamily from room to room. She could not sleep, she could not eat. A still despair that settled her face in rigid, inflexible lines, filled her heart. Her present had been engulfed, as it were, in a moment. Would Carroll call that morning? If he did, should she see him?

As the hours passed and he did not come, she took for granted that he had already heard the hated news. A revulsion of feeling set in. Not that she loved him much. Isabel loved no one deeply but herself, but self-love often has, however, tremendous simulations. Her pride was like a knotted whip—it lashed her into a fury of agony.

It chanced that the doorbell did not ring once, all the morning. It would surely be night, she thought, before her father would come back. She would go out, wander through the streets—anywhere, where the cold wind could fan her face.

Wrapped and veiled almost beyond recognition she went out alone into the storm. Where should she go? Ah, she would take the cars to the park. It would be deserted on a day like this. How good the keen, driving snow-laden wind would feel!

She went in at the Sixth-Avenue entrance. The evergreens along the terrace commanding the lake were bowed under their white burden. The frozen surface of the water spread an even, deserted expanse in its winding gorge. The main walks had been recently shoveled, so that her way was not much impeded, and yet familiar landmarks were so obliterated that she had to watch her course. Occasionally, she came upon a solitary policeman, who glanced at her, and then passed on. The park was virtually given up to the snow, the little brown birds, and herself. O, if she could only feel the dullness of the intense fatigue that made her ache all over. That future about which she had given such grand promises to her father! It stretched like a soaring, blank wall before her. The great house might be given up to boarders; of course that was all they could do with it, if they stayed there; or, perhaps they could rent it and go away to some remote country place to live. And then what would life be, away from

everybody? Everybody meant the gay world in which she had always supposed it was her inevitable lot, fixed as fate, to shine and rule.

She could not make Carroll Saxby marry her. Would she, if she were a man, marry the daughter of a bankrupt father? No, a thousand times, no! So, with a mental justice which she always exercised, and to which her conduct gave little clue, she fought with her wishes as futile, that yesterday had seemed as certain as the substantial home where beauty and luxury reigned, and sought to give up her lover with the same horrible certainty with which the night before she had abandoned other prospects. Life could never be what it had been, unless she made an immediate and brilliant marriage. They would have to be a new family twice over; and how very new they were, even Isabel did not know yet.

Those pigeon holes of great newspapers where all the family skeletons of social and business aspirants are kept duly inventoried awaiting death or failure, to break upon the gaping curiosity of the world, full-fledged, like some phœnix, at that most inopportune time of all—when a family is either very sad or very miserable—of such cyclopædias of the living Isabel had not the remotest suspicion. Like many another complacent maiden, she thought that her little world believed at least half the good things that it was a Chubbock trait for the Chubbocks to believe of themselves.

She lost her way all at once—doubling upon her steps, and coming back to a sequestered path leading through a dell from which she had started a half hour before. How had she come there? She gazed around her in blank bewilderment. How still it was, as if she were the only person in the world! The trees looked friendly and warm in their close, furry mantle of snow. Her fraternal instincts reached out

to these mute witnesses of her struggle; in some inscrutable way they gave her comfort. She turned back and came under a low bridge with a wide staircase leading to the East drive, and then, all at once, her mind was clear. With the passing away of her perplexity, she sat down on one of the steps, utterly fatigued and indifferent.

All around her, the marble tiles and steps were padded with whitest cushions softer than velvet. Above her was a blinding swirl of feathery flakes dancing so closely together that a few feet higher up made a thick cloud of pale gray. Not a sound. The desolation was awful.

She lifted her veil and looked upon it all, until its appalling negation of everything bright and warm and full of color seemed to congeal her very thought. She wished she could freeze to death there.

Isabel was not the only lady who had sought the park. She had gone thither with the first trouble of her life that seemed mightier than her own powers of resistance. The longer she remained, the more gigantic grew its proportions.

Madeline, looking from her windows on Fifth avenue, saw before her the wide expanse of the park. Its snow-laden trees, its open glades and the memory of walks and drives with which she had been familiar from childhood, filled her with an irresistible desire for a walk too. Her action seconded her thought, and in a few minutes she had also entered the park. She wandered hither and thither, rejoicing in the quiet, the whiteness and her apparent absolute possession.

By-and-by she came out upon the Mall, walked back and forth a few minutes where she could enjoy its rows of pine trees, wierdly transformed now, and looking like lines of white-robed Druids standing in silent worship, and then, crossing the open space where the East and the West drives diverge, she

reached the flight of stairs at whose foot Isabel was sitting, a tired, dejected little heap of humanity whom she entirely failed to recognize.

Her sympathies were at once awakened. Here was some despairing woman who had come thither in trouble, as she had in serene peace of mind. Filled with the tenderest solicitude, she went down the cushioned steps so softly that the abstracted, discouraged girl heard no sound, was conscious of no presence, until Mrs. Winchester stood before her.

She looked up, startled; but, when her gaze met the gentle, appealing eyes above her, she felt that sudden and overwhelming confidence and helplessness which the most self-reliant sometimes experience, if they suddenly come heart to heart with a nature greater than their own, and when they suppose themselves forsaken. The longer she had sat there, the more she had felt as if she had a brand upon her which would make her shunned and shunning.

"What is it, dear?" and Madeline sat down in the snow beside Isabel, and drew the white, tearless face against her own.

Not since the days of Isabel's earliest recollection, had anyone mothered her. She herself had caressed others, for her own selfish purposes, hundreds of times, but who had ever taken her in their arms before, and spoken to her in tones and words full of that unexplainable and indescribable sweetness which can come only from a woman overflowing with sympathy and who is at leisure from herself?

Isabel began to cry. She thought of all the petty insinuations that she had taken a mischievous pleasure in venting ever since Mrs. Winchester's return, of her tirades against learned women, and the moneyed uses to which such cleverness was put oftener than not. And here she was, poor! Ah, what a different thing is poverty when it is ours and not another's—when the poor that we have always with us is our

very own self. She felt so poor in pocket; it was the only thing in this world that could make Isabel feel poor in spirit.

"Don't you know? Haven't you heard yet?" she said at length.

"I know nothing, my dear. I supposed that you were one of the most envied girls in New York. I will not say the happiest, for I have not thought you happy."

Isabel looked up for an instant. How had this Mrs. Winchester been able to read her like that? Had she read all her little maneuvers equally well? Suddenly she felt the vulgarity of assumptions in questions, manners, and looks she had carried off with an air of such complacent superiority. And this woman—this lady—had been still and sweet and unruffled under it all, not because she had understood, but because it was all so puerile. She felt wretchedly mean and self-conscious, and began to lose the solace she had taken from the sympathy.

She rose, wiped her eyes, and mustering herself, said coldly:

"You have been very kind, Mrs. Winchester. I must not keep you here. I must go home, too."

"You must let me take you home. You are not well. We can walk down to the entrance where I will call a cab."

Madeline did not wait for Isabel to refuse, but drew an arm within her own, holding the cold little hand in her warm one, and leading the silent girl through that same lonely dell where she had stood in such forsaken discouragement a little while ago.

"Papa has failed, Mrs. Winchester," said Isabel, abruptly, after several minutes.

"And you feel so sorry for him? I am sorry, too."

This was worse and worse. Her chief sorrow was for herself. After warding off the disgrace of suicide, and seeing her father fortified for the day down-town,

her thoughts had left him absolutely, and had centered upon resources to be tried, and the downfall of her own personal hopes.

"You think me better than I am," she said spasmodically. "I have been thinking of the future, and I don't see how I can help it, either."

"Neither do I. I forgot that you are not as old as I am," and she pressed Isabel's hand. If she could only help this bright, cold nature into that life which is sealed except to those who undergo tribulation. And if Isabel could help Carroll. Poor Rebecca! was Madeline's next thought, for the heart endowment of this friend had been lavished and was destined to be, in her estimation, on soil that would give but poor returns. Her next thought was one of chance, for was not the most blessed giving, of whatever kind, that which hoped for no reward? Was not that indeed the only giving?

"Why do you trouble yourself about me, Mrs. Winchester? I have been rude to you. I have never had any sympathy from anybody, and I can get along without it very well."

"No you can't," said Madeline, firmly. "You do not at any time want so much that it will make you weak; but you will want and need a great deal, all through life. As for your having been rude—you are very young, my dear, and you have no mother."

"No. O, Mrs. Winchester, if you knew what it is to grow up your very own way. That is what we girls have done. We have all pulled apart; and now how are we to get along together, in close quarters?"

Madeline smiled a little at this trouble which nevertheless might be a very real one.

"Will you let me try to be a mother to you through this crisis? I have suffered a great deal, as you know, and those who have suffered the most should help the most. Otherwise how would trouble fit us for the kingdom of heaven?"

What capacity for real affection Isabel had was stirred. Her cold, sensuous, intellectual nature was softened for the moment. A genuine, if narrow loyalty to Madeline was awakened. She poured out her perplexities, her mortification—her questioning, even, concerning Carroll.

She never could make the highest, finest type of woman; that Madeline knew, as Carroll could never be the highest type of man. But she could become a tremendously useful woman, and a woman of great influence. In what way could she be helped?

"My dear, I would not mistrust Mr. Saxby until there was absolute occasion for doing so. Wait till he proves to you that a little wealth, more or less, or a little worldly success, more or less, could make a difference. If he is that kind of man, you are better off without him."

Such Quixotism met with no response. If Carroll gave her up, the cup of her humiliation would be full.

Madeline continued:

"We are all created for a purpose—everyone. Not one of us is allowed to live in this world for mere pleasure, either. If we seek it, we shall certainly lose it. Try to find out what you were made for, at this crisis, my dear."

"I have been trying all day," said Isabel, dolefully, "and I haven't the remotest idea."

"You were made to lead an active life. I do not want to shock you, but, if you do not grow into a very good and useful woman, you will become a wicked woman—as God counts wickedness. You know your powers, Isabel, as well as you will when you are forty. If you use them conscientiously, the way will open day by day for their fuller and better action. It would be a presumptuous thing for one person to decide definitely for another. Each must take that responsibility for herself."

"What a very serious, matter-of-fact thing living is, as soon as one loses wealth," was Isabel's uppermost reflection.

They reached the park entrance. The drive down to Madison square over the stony pavement prevented further conversation.

When Madeline reached home, she found Mr. and Mrs. Saxby buoyant. The former handed her an evening paper, and, pointing to a leader in staring, bold letters, said, "Read that!"

"I am very sorry for the young ladies," said Madeline, warmly, when she had finished.

"Will do them good—do them good!" said John, emphatically.

"You forget about Carroll," said Madeline.

"No, I don't! I hope this will put a break upon him. He was rushing that disgraceful engagement so tremendously, that he declared he would be married in the summer."

"Do you think, Madeline, under the circumstances, he ought to marry Isabel?" Rebecca suddenly dropped her eyes.

"Ought to marry her! Why not?"

"O, it's the blood," said John impatiently. "She might be as poor as a church mouse for aught Rebecca or I would care, but whenever I have looked at Timothy Chubbock this winter—ugh! I could think of nothing but a toad!"

"Hush, John," said Rebecca. "Believe me, Madeline, the failure in itself, which, however, is horrible, does not influence us. We want an excuse; we feel desperate over this engagement. I'm sure I've always been fond of Isabel, but to call her my daughter!" Rebecca's pretty chin trembled and her eyes filled.

"The failure *is* bad," said Madeline, "but I believe that eventually you would both be proud of Isabel, her father notwithstanding."

John and Rebecca looked coldly away. If she could not give the advice they wanted, she would better not give any.

When she had locked herself in her room, she took out the locket containing Carroll's picture. What was her duty in this unhappy matter? To allow Carroll to marry under the supposition that Rosalia was alive, was not to be thought of. That would be a sin, for she never doubted but that the details of the sad story had come under her notice for a beneficent purpose.

Was Carroll fit to marry even Isabel? She felt perplexed. She knew his story would never make a moment's difference with such a girl. It would be something simply to be ignored. Modern innocence consists so often of assumed ignorance, that, as long as many girls are flattered in the continuance of this assumption, they display a facile faculty in exercising charity sufficient to remove mountains if those mountains obstruct a matrimonial post-road. No, so far as her duty was concerned, it had to do wholly with Carroll. Her love and her gratitude to Rebecca, if she had no higher incentives, were strong enough to impel her to exercise any good influence she might have over Carroll. If Isabel's reverses made her serious and awakened her from her frivolous and sordid views, Carroll's instinctive recognition of her complementary nature would be justified. Isabel could understand a man like Carroll, and Carroll, a women like Isabel. Blanche, if what Mark had told her was true, would antagonize him through the very best side of his nature.

She could not in any way abuse Rebecca's many kindnesses by influencing Carroll in favor of Isabel, whatever her personal convictions might be. Outside of all these considerations, with that spirit of knight errantry still found among some men an...

women, she felt she owed a duty to the memory of that simple peasant girl asleep in Interlachen.

On her way down-stairs to dinner Madeline met Carroll. He looked particularly handsome, as he stood at the foot of the stairs waiting for her. Like almost everyone else who came under the influence of her daily life, he had a warm admiration and respect for her. Besides, Carroll found an added attraction in her engagement with Mark Dascom. Younger than his mother and yet sufficiently older than himself for him to feel all that worshipful trust which a younger man will often have for a woman ten or fifteen years his senior, he appeared at his best in her society.

Madeline took his arm as they walked through the drawing-room. He seated her with affectionate regard. Her heart was beating violently with the thought of the interview for which she must seek an early opportunity.

Rebecca and John declared their intention of going to the opera. There at her very feet, perhaps, was laid the occasion.

"Are you going out to-night, also, Mr. Carroll?" asked Madeline, as they rose from the table.

"No, as it is stormy, I shall indulge in the rarity of reading a new book. I will keep you company in the library to-night, Mrs. Winchester."

She smiled assent. She wondered if he had seen Isabel. He certainly carried off the unpleasant details in the evening papers with great unconcern.

When they were alone, and Madeline, though reading, was feeling the locket in her pocket through the folds of her dress, Carroll rather abruptly threw down his book, and went and stood by the mantel opposite her.

She looked up a little gravely, even solicitously.

"Mrs. Winchester, I want a confidant."

She closed her book, and, turning her chair toward him, replied:

"This is a good hour for confidence."

"I want your advice about Miss Chubbock. Of course mother has told you all about the family disagreement in consequence of my engagement. And now here is this confounded failure."

"Have you seen Miss Isabel to-day?"

"No," and Carroll flushed slightly. "I thought it better to keep away till after the first violence of the storm had passed; and—and I could not trust myself to see her."

Her eyes dilated. "What a reed," was her thought. Where there is undue love of pleasure, there is undue fear of pain.

"Not that I would fail in showing Isabel all proper attention—all that sort of thing—if! She will be terribly broken up, and doubtless she will want a little time to recover before seeing me. I have written."

"Ah!" said Madeline.

"You think I'm a dastardly mean fellow, I know. The truth is, Mrs. Winchester—I'll be frank!" this in a tone as if much redeeming virtue lay in the frankness. "Mr. Chubbock, *père*, I have had to take all along with my eyes shut, and I may as well admit it to you; I do not know how to stand that family under these changed conditions, even for Isabel. I know that you are good and disinterested, and will see everything in a fair light. Now what would you do?"

By some strange fitness for the task in their estimation, or through the chances of her acquaintance, she had found herself repeatedly called upon to help a man to an opinion in the weightiest affair of his life. She tried to fancy herself or Mark calling in a third person.

She gazed at Carroll so studiously and withal so unconsciously, that he grew uncomfortable.

"Mr. Carroll," she said, at length, in a vibrant tone of voice that arrested him strangely, "you will think it very odd when I tell you that only this afternoon I decided to take you into my confidence about a matter relating very closely to yourself."

What did she mean? He gazed at her a little coldly and critically. It was certainly uncalled for, such a tone, when he had intended to pay her a great honor. For a young man to ask a senior woman's advice is not unfrequently the occasion for inward comment that he has been showing extreme condescension.

"I had a maid, while in Europe, Mr. Carroll—"

He braced himself perceptibly.

"Who was a Swiss peasant from Vitznau. She was a sad, broken-hearted little woman who was drowned, either intentionally or by accident, in the Aar, at Interlachen. She saw you on the day of her death, while out with me. Before her body had been disturbed, I took a locket from her neck." She rose as she handed the jewel to Carroll.

He opened it, his lips set firmly together, a strained, wounded look on his face that showed that his first love had not been wholly destroyed.

"Where were you when you saw me?" he asked, with a visible effort.

"Sitting under the lindens, in the meadows in front of the hotels. You passed us, absorbed in conversation with a young lady."

"So Rosalia was alone while watching for me when I drove away," he thought, with relief and remorse combined.

"Well?" he said, finally, glancing at Madeline with a touch of defiance.

"I wanted you to know that Rosalia is dead. She has, therefore, no further claim on you."

Had any being in this world a right to talk to him thus? Even this woman, who knew, doubtless, all his promises and his desertion? Such things

were happening somewhere, as a matter of course, every day in the year. Like a clear, impalpable vision, but real, he saw Rosalia leaning against the walnut tree, and himself bowling over the smooth road of the gay little resort, and ever and ever receding until that round face and those longing eyes were lost to sight. Had she gone thence to the river?

If he had not been ashamed to do so, he would have fled from the room. There stood that tall, majestic woman with a face like an angel's, looking at him intently, sadly, wondering what he would say. He knew what must be her inevitable thought. It could hardly be a question with a woman like Mrs. Winchester whether even the Chubbock family should consider an alliance with him. How the tables had been turned upon his scruples!

Before him rose the two faces, Rosalia's and Isabel's, one of them, though dead, attracting and repelling him in turn. It was an accusing face. Had Rosalia drowned herself for him? That was an ugly thought to follow him through life. He grew pale. Great drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead. She looked well, subdued, and heavy, as all the women of her class do, so early, and yet—it was him those hungry, quiet eyes were watching. And he had crossed that very river in which she had floated and found her death. Would the sound of its rushing current and the gleam of deep waters haunt his ears and eyes forever? Then Isabel gained his attention, and the very thought of her influence was a relief. She would be a wife to make the picture of Rosalia fade into oblivion. She was a girl who would take such an episode for granted. The trust of girls like Isabel was always given with reservations, and a man need have no scruple, therefore, in tacitly claiming the ground on which his honor was

reckoned. He felt a horrible relief in this crisis that there was no one but Madeline to accuse him. So rarely does a third person take upon himself, voluntarily, her position, that he was inclined to mentally justify himself, by criticism upon her want of delicacy and good taste. What fatality had pursued him that he had been overtaken with a passion for two women, neither of whom satisfied his ambition? Why had he not kept untrameled and been content with the cold and negative virtues of Blanche?

How little could Madeline judge of all this balancing of motives and impulses, aud least of all of the remotest self-justification. She only saw the pallor, the emotion, and hoped for the best.

He paced up and down the room, several times. He came back to where she stood, at length.

"I shall go away, Mrs. Winchester." He stood still, waiting for judgment.

But Madeline had none to pass. When he looked up it was to meet her eyes full of grave and tender inquiry.

"I shall see Isabel to-morrow. Do you think this sad and unfortunate affair would prevent her from marrying me—if—if I decided that it was advisable for us to be married?"

"If I said I thought she would marry you, knowing this, would it please you?"

Carroll turned pale with shame and anger. It touched the grain of his sentiment to have Isabel lowered to the level of his question, let alone his thought, and yet this was what Mrs. Winchester had done. She was evidently one of those impracticable women who held a common standard for both men and women. They made a man so uncomfortable with their views.

"I admit that I committed a great indiscretion. I ceased to love Rosalia—and—now I love Isabel. I am unwilling to say anything further."

"I do not want your confession, Carroll; but I had no right to your further confidence till you had mine. What I have said rests between you and me alone."

He gave her a grateful look. "I believe it."

Then, the higher side of his nature gaining the supremacy, he took her hands, and said, "I want advice."

She shook her head sadly.

"I cannot give it, except to say that personally I cannot conceive of outward circumstances deciding the question of marriage, if two persons are otherwise congenial. How deep and enduring the bond between Miss Isabel and yourself is, you two alone can judge. I think she is a girl of fine possibilities—stronger than you are in some respects, and that if you do marry her you owe it to her, but also to yourself if you are to reverence her properly as your wife, to try to redeem the past before you claim her unqualified promise. If you do this, and she develops what is best in her but dormant, the waiting will have been worth the while for both. But, whatever you do, go to her and comfort her in this first sore trouble of her life."

"You have been like a sister, Mrs. Winchester."

"Your mother was my one friend in a time of unspeakable need. Her son may make almost any claim on me he chooses. Believe me, I have spoken to you as I would to my own son or brother, under like circumstances. Good-night."

She picked up her book and left the room.

There remained with Carroll a conception of goodness and purity which smote across his startled conscience with the power of a revelation. Even his lovely, beautiful mother was not this kind of a woman. What must Mark Dascom be, if he held the heart, the very secrets of such a soul as his own most precious and entire possession!

CHAPTER IX.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET.

A WEEK after the events narrated in the last chapter, and while Madeline was dressing to drive with Mr. Dascom, Jasper brought her Isabel's card.

"Bring Miss Chubbock to my room."

"Yaas'm, Mrs. Winchester." Jasper's square shoulders and bushy eyebrows showed signs of suppressed astonishment. Madeline he could have accepted, had she been clothed in rags. Isabel, in satins, and with all the paraphernalia of wealth had always incensed him, as, in her effort to be patrician, she was constantly overstepping the mark. With her loss of fortune his contempt for her became boundless. It was with infinite condescension that he stepped inside the drawing-room, gave her a level glance, an inimitable copy of many previous ones he had seen her cast, and announced:

"Mrs. Winchester say—if you please, Miss, walk up to her room."

If Isabel had been a hair-dresser or some other nondescript functionary, Jasper could not have stood to one side more superciliously, as she passed out of the room. She felt miserable. "Even servants had no respect for Babylon when fallen," was the substance, if not the form of her thought.

"My dear," said Madeline, taking both her hands, and kissing her gently, "excuse me a few minutes, as I shall have to defer an engagement."

"I will come again," said Isabel, with a touch of genuine, even artless humility in her tone.

"No, no. I want you to stay. I am sure I can give you an hour. I am very glad to see you." All this Madeline said as she was leaving the room, and the words were accompanied with a glance so cordial and kindly, that Isabel sank back once more in her chair.

Madeline glided down the stairs and through the hall to the library where Mark was waiting for her. "Will you postpone our drive till an hour later?"

He looked surprised. What engagement could she have which would place him second. "Did you not name three o'clock?" he asked, and then they both laughed at the present narrowness of their various duties and pleasures.

"I did," she said gently. "But, as we are still in this world, an impediment has offered in the way of a person I can help very much by doing so now."

"Very well. I shall be back in an hour, punctually."

"I shall be waiting for you."

She was gone as quickly as she had come, and, five minutes later, Isabel was seated on a lounge beside her, pouring out the history of the past three days, for Madeline had gone to see the child twice since their encounter in the park.

"It is so different, and the past seems as obliterated as though I had died. When I get used to it, it will not be so dreadful but that I can live through it. It is the surprises which break me down. I get all braced ready for them, and then they never come in the way I expect or through the persons I fancy they will." She thought of Jasper.

"They will come to an end, too, after a while."

"Yes, everything will, and I do not know but that this excitement is better for me. It keeps me pugnacious most of the time. When we get back on that

farm in the mountains, board and washing at five dollars a week apiece,"—Isabel shut her lips till the dimples came in either cheek and looked blankly at Madeline,—"I'm sure I don't know what the living can be—among relatives, too! I did not know such people were in existence till—now! When we get up there—then—"

"Yes, then it will be hard. But your courage will be equal to the occasion."

"It may not. I shall certainly never stay there if I find it oozing out in spite of myself. I suppose you know that Jeannette is going to Europe this summer as companion to an invalid lady. Jeannette can talk French and German like a parrot—about all she can do—so she is disposed of. Papa thinks it will all be temporary—that our candle is only snuffed pretty short—not gone out—but I don't know—"

"What have Carroll and you decided?"

"We have agreed neither to be engaged for a year, nor to correspond. It seems, Mrs. Winchester, he had an earlier love affair, and the girl is dead. He feels miserable over it—uncertain about his present feelings—all that sort of thing, to which I listened, but of which I do not believe a single word. However, I I gave him his release—and a year from now, perhaps, he will know whether he loves me. It will not take me a year to make up my mind about him."

Madeline was nonplussed. There was not a tear in those clear gray eyes—hardly a quiver of the pretty mouth. All the latent hardness of her character, the realism of everyday life which she had hitherto veiled under the softer conditions of her circumstances, was revealed.

"I've made up my mind," she said slowly, clasping her two hands over her knee, "that if, as a woman, I have to face these things alone now, I do not want Carroll Saxby for a husband—ever. I wouldn't marry him even now."

"Have you thought what you could do to take care of yourself?"

She shook her head. "No, only that I must begin at the bottom, whatever I do. My music is a mere accomplishment. Perhaps I'll take up government land, or study medicine, or open a broker's office. If I do anything, it will be something ultra. I shall want the full benefit of that sort of emancipation."

"But what shall you yourself be, my dear child?"

"Timothy Chubbock's daughter. Nothing more, nothing less. The papers ought to have told you by this time, Mrs. Winchester, what that signifies."

She had spoken with great bitterness.

"But even as Timothy Chubbock never forgets a kindness, neither will his daughter." She was softening now rapidly. "You have been kind to me. You are better than anyone I have ever known; but—O, Mrs. Winchester!" and she buried her face suddenly in Madeline's lap, "I'm so unhappy. I can't see an inch before me. I love nobody, and no one loves me. I have been wicked and hard all my life, and I feel ten times worse since these reverses than I ever did before. I didn't mean to talk this way to-day. I meant—I meant to try to be like you. But it's no use. The sooner I'm transported to that farm the better."

"See here, Isabel," said Madeline, half shrinking herself from the promise she was about to make, and she wiped the tears away from the girl's hot face, "take the summer to consider your future, and, whether your father should be able to support you in luxury or not, choose some definite and proper activity for your life to which marriage shall be incidental. That will come without your seeking, if you are intended for it. And, my dear, if you need assistance, whether in money, influence or protection,

I shall then be in a position to help you to a reasonable extent in any or all of these ways. Now dry your eyes, my child, and take courage."

Isabel sat up, determination shining through her tears. Here was something very different indeed from what her active mind would have embraced a month ago, but delightful now in this violent reaction in which pride and will were struggling, and an object with which to beguile the monotony of the dreaded summer.

"I believe I was made to lead an active, independent life."

"I believe"—Madeline's solemnity arrested her attention—"that you were made to be a highly useful woman, and a woman therefore of great influence. And now, since I have given you a promise, I want you to make me one."

Isabel looked a little startled.

"I want you to promise me that you will pray every night, and that you will make your choice for the autumn; first, after considering your special abilities, and secondly with a view to doing the greatest possible amount of moral good. Morals must enter into all work that women do, if they are to be happy in their work. In some form or another, child, they have to be teachers, reformers, even preachers. Do your part for my sake, until you do it because you love it, for the power it will give you to do good and get good."

The loyalty of her narrow but active nature was stirred. That blessed boon which all seek had, moreover, been given her, a friend whom she could both reverence and trust. She took Madeline's hands, and, reaching up, kissed her and said softly, "I promise."

As Isabel went down-stairs and out, she forgot all about Jasper, all about the failure; it did not even occur to her that she was in Carroll's home. Her

busy, hopeful little brain was projecting many a picture, most of them sordid and foolish, but there was a healthful leaven working in her heart.

Madeline's drive with Mark was her first appearance with him in public. She might meet no one whom she had formerly known, and she might meet many. They could hardly fail to attract attention, as he was almost a public character through his vast business enterprises and his many philanthropies. Any woman to whom his attention was given would have to be an object of comment. For his sake she wished she were less indifferent to what Mrs. Grundy might think or say. If she were, it might spur her to something of the social effort of her youth.

If she could only have realized it, her unworldly repose was one of her great charms to her betrothed. The womanly and majestic strength of her character, the calm but intellectual sweetness of her eyes, and the absoluteness of her trust, her love, her dependence on his strength and care, made him rejoice more and more in this woman whom he had sought the world over to find. More and more she confirmed the correctness of his immediate intuition concerning her, and already she was inconceivably more to him than his fondest fancy could have hoped while his affections were still unengaged.

It was a mild day.

He assisted her into the victoria with a reverent gentleness that to her was as soothing and as nameless in its charm as the warm south wind fanning her cheeks.

The fine grays curveted an instant, then struck into an even pace, and soon joined the vast procession in the park.

It seemed but yesterday, now that the gap of the intervening years had been spanned, since she was part of that gay, moving, ever-changing throng.

She looked upon the bright, beautiful panorama with the ever-abiding consciousness of Mark beside her—not only through future joy if it should be theirs, but through whatever sorrow might assail her—and she was with him, for weal or for woe, for better, for worse. Neither would ever stand alone while the other was in the world. There was but one road, henceforth, for them; whether it should be strewn with thorns or roses, so long as they walked it side by side, thorns would be better than roses, if alone, far better than a solitary path however softened by flowers of ease or splendor.

Many curious glances were turned upon them as they passed the equipages of one well known leader of fashion after another. They were conspicuously handsome, and, even in their high-bred reserve, too conspicuously satisfied, for gossips not to draw conclusions. When Madeline was once seen at Mark's side, that rarest of all convictions pressed itself home upon many minds ordinarily obtuse enough, that they certainly looked as if made for each other.

All at once, on a wide curve, they came opposite Mrs. Allerton, who bowed coldly to Mark, ignoring Madeline; but, in that bright sunlight and with the carriages in such a position that their view was a longer one than usual, his sister had a dazzled, irresistible sense of his discernment.

Madeline looked like the preconceived notions some idealistic persons have of duchesses before having seen many of those grand personages.

Mrs. Allerton was not alone in this opinion. Although Rebecca's chaperonage had brought Madeline little attention, it was surprising, by Easter, how many had found out that Mrs. Winchester was back once more. "So lovely, so abused, too, in the past, and going to marry Mark Dascom, you know." Ah, this last fact settled many an

abstruse question in social statics pertaining to Mrs. Winchester which might otherwise have remained forever undecided.

It was on Easter Sunday that Mark received a flag of truce in the shape of a note from his sister who had gotten heartily tired of being let alone. With Blanche in a new spring costume, strong and fair as a lily and more beautiful than ever, it seemed easier to condone her brother's "romantic foolishness," for, by this time, what, a month before, had been "a social crime," had been graded to an epithet capable, eventually, of all sorts of modifications. The note ran in this wise:

"*Dear Brother Mark:*

"Our darling Blanche is well once more, and begs to see her uncle. Will you dine with us to-day at one? If not otherwise engaged we shall be glad to have you occupy our pew and come home from church with us.

"As always, sincerely and affectionately,

"Your sister CHARLOTTE.

"P. S. Mr. Allerton thinks that I was severe concerning Mrs. Winchester. We will talk the matter over thoroughly when you come. C. A."

Mark had an incipient nervous thrill over the thoroughness; still as family harmony, at least to outward seeming, was desirable, he sent word that while unable to be with her at church, he would dine with her.

It chanced that, during the service, Madeline sat two seats in front of the Allerton pew, but in the side aisle, so that Blanche could gaze to her heart's content. Whether it was Madeline who made the conquest, or whether it was Blanche's youthful idolatry of her uncle which invested everything he did or possessed with more than mortal charms, I cannot tell, but she dropped her prayer-book in the middle of the "General Confession," so absorbed was her admiring regard of the tall, elegant woman whom her mother

had called "Mrs. Winchester!" in a whisper and with a little *moue* as they were seating themselves.

When the service was over the crowd gathered in the aisle so closely that Blanche became separated from her mother, and walked all the way down to the door side by side with Madeline, whose brown eyes looked straight into the blue ones with so much sweetness and good-will that from that moment Blanche was her sworn friend and champion.

Mark had hardly crossed his sister's threshold before Blanche sprang into his arms, and between her kisses and hugs whispered, "She is perfectly lovely! You always do what is just right, Uncle Mark, always!" and the loving girl kissed him again with a vehemence that would have surprised Carroll Saxby, could he have witnessed it. But Carroll, either fortunately or unfortunately, was off on the Pacific coast.

I will not weary the reader with Mrs. Allerton's retreats and advances, with her sieges and her parleyings, with her tears and her reproaches, with her final concessions and unconditional capitulation. When the surrender had finally and formally taken place, and the evacuation of all her illogical premises had been made, Mark told her that his wedding would occur in May at the Saxby country-seat among the Connecticut hills.

"Blanche must look her fairest," he said, and added, as if the fact would be of trifling importance to his sister, "for Earl Molyneux and his eldest son are coming over. The Saxbys, yourselves, and my English friends will be the sole guests. Madeline wishes the wedding-party to be small, and all the arrangements as simple as possible."

"She is quite right, quite right! She was always a woman of excellent taste, I must admit that!" said Mrs. Allerton, adjusting her eye-glasses emphatically. "And so Earl Molyneux is really coming over at last. How old is his son?"

"Twenty-three.'

Her eyes closed a little. "Blanche will have both him and Carrol to entertain. Well, I hope she won't waste her sweetness on Carroll. He really deserves nothing at her hands. Such ungentlemanly, shameful neglect of her during her illness!"

"There will be no danger, after she sees Lord Clinton. He is an exceptionally fine fellow."

"Very English?"

"Not too English. You will like him."

"Well, Mark," said Mrs. Allerton, with an excess of cordiality which the last item of news had elicited, "when a breach is healed with me, it is healed. I'll take Mrs. Winchester under my wing from henceforth. I will go to see her to-morrow. Would you like to have Blanche call too?"

"Certainly."

"We'll all go, Mr. Allerton also. That will, of course, be the only proper thing."

Mark kissed his sister, and rising, said, "I must go now, Charlotte. I want to accompany Mrs. Winchester to afternoon service."

"I am glad she is so religious. We saw her at church this morning. Her manner was admirable—so devout! I do not believe she noticed a soul till after the benediction."

He glanced at her a little strangely. He wondered, if Madeline chose to do so, in what way she would describe Mrs. Allerton's phylacteries.

Madeline was however neither a modern Pharisee nor a Sadducee. She was simply one of that unbroken line of silent, worshiping women who, of whatever sect or creed, have followed Christ from the first anniversary of his resurrection till the latest. She was, in many deep and comforting senses, a disciple of the new dispensation.

CHAPTER X.

A WEDDING.

It was the fourteenth of May. Saxby Place was like a garden of the Lord in the beauty of its dimpled peacefulness. Its high plateaus looked down upon valleys smiling with richness, upon belts of timber containing still a sprinkling of primeval giants, where waving tops were penciled against stretches of the bluest sky, encircling in cup-like depths a varied and pastoral wealth of landscape, as pure and sweet to the eye as the fragrant air was soothing to the spirit.

On the summit of the largest a cluster of hills, overlapping one another and flowing together until their breeze-swept sides looked like a vast green velvet robe folding in and out and changing color in the light and shadow, stood Saxby House.

Not a cloud was in the sky. Robins and golden-breasted orioles rang the chimes of their tuneful peals in fruit and shade trees. The first comers among the humming birds fluttered on gauzy wings over the beds of fragrance in purple and white bloom where violets and lilies-of-the-valley hid their prayerful heads. Up from the reedy swamps darkling in the hollows came the whirr and resonant murmur of the ephemeral life those still and teeming waters sheltered. From barn-yards rose on the dreamy air

the deliberate, lazy crowing of belated cocks. Fresh, almost transparent foliage which the wind, the sunshine and the rain had kissed into ethereal beauty through the short days of happy spring, rustled and swayed in the light breeze. The high, radiant light bathed the grass, the flowers, the hills, the homes, the villages, like flecks of cloud against the emerald slopes, and glanced back in joyous smiles from the sparkling Sound outlining the distant horizon.

The mellow-throated bell in the tall white steeple of a neighboring village cut the air with twelve musical notes, and those waves of sound vibrated till they carried their message of appointment to Madeline. They seemed to set a thousand regal blooms of wisteria that shut in a square piazza in rythmical, stately motion, for it was under the shadow of their flowering that her marriage was to take place.

The floor of the piazza was covered with a thick, eastern rug. Ferns and palms filled in the corners and mingled their dark green richness with the pale and fragile beauty of the vine leaves still undeveloped. The mild perfume of the wisteria blended with the vibrant, mystical hum of scores of golden-backed bees plunging their proboscides into the purple flowers, and drinking from morning till night of the intoxicating sweetness. Such happy, busy life, never fluttering an inch from the blossoms, giving depth of color and fervor of existence wherever their song resounded.

Against one of the pillars, in a dress that matched the flowers in color, stood Mrs. Allerton, her blue eyes as soft to-day as the bloom on her cheeks. Rebecca, in a dress of palest gold, relieved at the throat and in the facings of the train with garnet velvet, stood beside Mrs. Allerton, the contour of her face and the splendid color of her hair making her look like some dream of Titian that had taken

on bodily form. Blanche, in the palest possible blue, her fair hair fairer still in the morning light, her sweet, clear face subdued and tremulous, was beside her mother. The gentlemen were opposite—Carroll as complacent and composed as the ocean after some pitiless storm in which it has caused unwonted havoc; Mr. Allerton, pompous, severe, and with the continually surprised, alert look which stupendous official dignity might be supposed to warrant; Mr. Saxby, ruddy, radiant, happy in his surroundings—and the English guests reticent, high-bred in their demeanor, and looking neither bored nor weather-beaten nor slovenly. Lord Clinton had the square and dominant English jaw, a clean-cut, manly face that set in relief the irresoluteness of Carroll's too handsome countenance. Blanche, in one of the many glances she cast on the opposite side of the porch saw the difference, and any allusion born of years of girlish cherishing which she had hitherto fostered, was dispelled forever. In that silent interval of expectant waiting, she saw Carroll as he really was.

And now, as the last stroke of that village bell echoed upon the still air, Rebecca's rector came from the house and walked into the extemporized chancel which Blanche and Lord Clinton had trimmed that morning with all manner of pure white flowers.

A few minutes later Mark and Madeline came out alone. There were no brides-maids, no groomsmen. Such a train was for men and women younger than they. They walked unattended down that shady, flowery vista, at mid-day, in the high tide of their life, with as many fair years before them, perchance, as chequered ones that had glided into the silent past; on both faces was written the sacrament which had been solemnized in their vows and mutual love long before, and only wanted this public confirmation to make it perfect.

Never had Madeline looked more beautiful. About her carriage, her expression, there was an exalted chasteness, a grand, unconscious dignity.

Mark took his place at her side, resting his eyes on a bit of the blue sky shining through an opening in the foliage at the further end of the piazza, his countenance and attitude those of a man who was lifted above the thought of everything but this one great glad gift which had come into his life.

The stillness seemed almost audible just before the words of the marriage service fell on the sweet air. Not a fan was fluttered, not a position was changed by the listeners, till the last sentence was spoken. Even then, for a minute, there was a reverent silence.

The sunlight had found a crevice among the flowers, and, falling in a long, golden streak upon Madeline's head and dancing in flickering radiance on the soft folds of her white dress, illuminated her paleness. Her face was peaceful, her expression one of transporting happiness.

Mark looked at her as if he had forgotten that there were others present, and as though some tall, white-robed angel stood beside him.

So intent had been their participation in this greatest event of their life, that their spirit of mutual and perfect surrender made a veil of silence which it seemed sacrilege to break.

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THE END.

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